"Where there is no vision the people perish"

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CONTENTS

★

Charles Hamilton Sorley, Athalie Bushnell 285

Italian Harvester, Alice Miller 292

Krishna's Flute, The Poetry of Sarojini Naidu, Dennis Edward Lingwood 293

The Sleeping Princess, Ian Serraillier 299

Windmill by the Sea, Dorothy Wellesley 302

POEMS OF PLACE: *Kew Gardens after Rain*, Wrenne Jarman ; *Huntsham Wood*, 1944, Joan Arundell Gaved 304

A Song of Birdlip, Edgar Proudman; *The Abbey, Glastonbury*, Nesta Martin 305

Westminster Bridge, 1945, John Cook ; *Annunciation to a Lover*, Howard Sergeant 307

Danger Imminent—Danger Past, Diana M. Moore; *Silence*, Ellodë Collins 308

Vision, Christmas Humphreys 309

Still Life, T. W. Ramsey 310 *Poets in Uniform*, Margery Smith 311

Sonnet on the Sonnet, T. M. Auld 312 *Experience*, Christina Chopin 313

For One Killed in the Blitz, Michael Delarche; *Fantasy*, C. Busby Smith 314

Smith, I. M. Mills; *To My Wife* 315

Will He No Come Back Again? Arthur Row; *Hand-Clasp*, Editha Melbourne; *Word-Hunger*, Jane Scott Parsons 316

Dynamics of American Poetry: CIX, Alice Hunt Bartlett 317

POETS AND PRETENDERS, *A Faithful and Axiomatic Survey* 327

Terry, LOIS DEACON 326; *The Feminine Touch*, E. D. Bangay 338

The Critic, John F. Waddington; *The Way to the Kingdom*, R. E. Boulton, 342

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR: *Weak Rhymes and Criticism*, John Normanton; *The Lay Reader*, Cullen Jones 343 *The Divinity of Robert Nichols*, Diana Momber 346 *Redwood Anderson's Poetry*, Elizabeth Myers 347 *The Purpose of Poetry*, Arthur Row 350 *The Subterrene Sky*, A. V. Law; *A. E. Housman and Transience*, R. P. Brett 352 *Three 1945 Centenaries*, Hugh Harris 353

DESERT ISLAND POEMS: Report and Analysis, Christmas Humphreys 355

THE HOLMES PRIZE FOR POEMS OF PLACE, Award and Comment 358

THE PREMIUM EDITOR'S REPORT: THE PREMIUM POEM 359

Notes, Reports, Announcements ii, iv, v

Poems of Thanksgiving Wanted, vi

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The Poetry Review

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VOL. XXXVI 1945 NUMBER 5

Charles Hamilton Sorley

AMONG the young poets who lost their lives in the 1914–18 war was one Charles Hamilton Sorley, a youth of twenty years of age whose poems are the hardly mature work of the schoolboy or student. It is to be regretted that the work of many of these young men of promise is known to a relatively small number, while the heroic patriotism of Rupert Brooke's *The Soldier* has become, probably, the most widely known poem produced by the war-poets of 1914–18. The reason, no doubt, is that heroic patriotism has far more appeal to mass psychology than cynicism or bitterness or even plain unvarnished truths. Sorley himself wrote, on learning of Brooke's death: "I think Brooke's earlier poems . . . are his best. That last sonnet-sequence of his . . . I find overpraised. He is far too obsessed with his own sacrifice. . . . He has clothed his attitude in fine words: but he has taken the sentimental attitude." This, perhaps, explains Brooke's fame, for it is the sentimental attitude always that appeals to the masses.

On the evidence of the published poems it seems very unlikely that Sorley would ever have become a great poet. The poems which we have of his are more finished examples of the schoolboy and student verse that emanates from every public school and university. A boy who—far from being a Peter Pan—was anxious to "grow up," who was full of the joy of living, and whose radiant personality infected with that same zest all with whom he associated. His housemaster wrote after Sorley's death: "I don't think he would have given his life to literature, if he had lived. No doubt, he studied the artistic form; but he did not live for poetry because he was vitally alive, and this vital force welled up into expression in that way. . . . The more I think of Sorley and his poetry, the more I seem to find at the heart of each a spiritual force with its roots right away from the surface world. . . . He enjoyed life, but was the least self-indulgent of boys."

On May 19, 1895, in Old Aberdeen, were born the twin sons of William Ritchie Sorley, Professor of Moral Philosophy. With lowland Scottish blood flowing through his veins, Charles Hamilton, the elder twin, learned to love the north also, for, until the boys were five years old, they and their elder sister spent a very happy childhood in Old Aberdeen.

In 1900, the appointment of their father as Knightbridge Professor at Cambridge brought the children south. Their education began, first under their mother's eye, and then a little later Charles went to the King's College Choir School. The twins, says their father, were always "eager to write down whatever came into their heads" and they, in tender youth, had already acquired a taste for good poetry and were well-versed in Shakespeare and the ballad-literature.

Eight years after the family's migration to Cambridge Charles gained a scholarship to Marlborough. He was a great adventurer and looked forward keenly to this new experience, his only regret being that he would be separated from his twin who was sent to another school.

During his stay at Marlborough, Sorley produced some of his best verse (published in *Marlborough and other poems* after his death). Once, in 1913, when his family were visiting him, they chanced upon a field "covered with great white flints." Someone said, "What a lot of stones, how hopeless it looks!" Charles was silent, but later he gave us *Stones*:

"This field is almost white with stones
That cumber all its thirsty crust.
And underneath, I know, are bones,
And all around is death and dust . . .

Dumb, imperceptibly astir,
These relics of an ancient race,
These men, in whom the dead bones were
Still fortifying their resting-place.

Their field of life was white with stones;
Good fruit to earth they never brought.
O, in these bleached and buried bones
Was neither love nor faith nor thought."

Sorley was supremely happy at Marlborough: the great fascination which the adventure of life had for him led him to give of his best and in return he reaped the true benefits of a public school education. And even in these early poems we find that Sorley was a thinker, thinking thoughts which gave birth to such impassioned tirades as "What you will":

"O come and see, it's such a sight,
So many boys all doing right:
To see them underneath the yoke,
Blindfolded by the elder folk,
Move at a most impressive rate
Along the way that is called straight.
O, it is comforting to know
They're in the way they ought to go.
But don't you think it's far more gay
To see them slowly leave the way
And limp and loose themselves and fall? . . ."

Sorley was passionately fond of walking or running in the open air, and the rain to him was an added attraction to a roam on the downs around Marlborough. "The Song of the Ungirt Runners" is the song of the Marlborough athlete:

"The rain is on our lips,
We do not run for prize.
But the storm the water whips
And the wave howls to the skies.

The winds arise and strike it
And scatter it like sand,
And we run because we like it
Through the broad bright land."

A fellow war-poet, Robert Graves, was moved by these frequent allusions to write a poem entitled "Sorley's Weather," ending,

"Yet rest there, Shelley, on the sill,
For though the winds come frorely,
I'm away to the rain-blown hill
And the ghost of Sorley."

In 1912 Sorley steeped himself in Masefield on whom he read a paper to the school literary society on November 3rd of that year, a paper which shows more clear thought and grasp of values than is always attributed to the 17-year-old athlete. "We cannot doubt," he says, "that Mr. Masefield is a runner"; and again, "he has at his command the nobility of Milton, the word-painting of Tennyson. And he chooses the lingo of the Shropshire slums. This is an example worth thinking about."

At this time Sorley was intent on becoming a social worker; his housemaster records the sentence in which Sorley summed up his feeling that social service was a very real career for him: "the most awfully sad thing in history is, I think, that poetry up till now has been mainly by and for and about the upper classes." His aim was to become an instructor in a workingman's college, and with this in mind (after being dissuaded from his idea of leaving school early and working in a London slum) he set himself to work for a scholarship to Oxford.

Sorley—although a rebel in some ways at school, he rebelled, for instance, against the traditional classical education, had a keen sense of honour and justice. The Master at Marlborough wrote, "One morning after repeated failures on his part to produce sufficient signs of preparation in his work, I told him in Form to write out the translation of the lesson. That day was glorious and after dinner I sent for him. I knew the boy's passionate love of open air and I could not bear to think of him spending the hours of sunshine in doing an imposition. I told him so. 'But, oh! Sir,' he said, 'that isn't fair: you know, I never did a stroke of work at it.' "

In December 1913 he won a scholarship to University College, Oxford, and it was decided that the six months remaining before he went up to the University should be spent on the Continent. In the New Year he went to Schwerin in Mecklenburg, where he lived with a lawyer and his family. Sorley found the Germans of Schwerin a delightful race. Writing to his parents describing a German field-day, he says, "When I got home, I felt I was a German, and proud to be a German: when the tempest of the singing was at its loudest, I felt that perhaps I could die for Deutschland, and I have never had an inkling of that feeling about England, and never shall"; and yet only eighteen months later he was to die for England fighting against Germany!

At Schwerin he skated and played hockey with great zest, finding, however, that while at Marlborough those who excelled at hockey were honoured rather than those who were well-versed in classics, "here the reverse. Hard on me, because at Marl-

borough I was if anything on the side of the angels who knew the first line of the *Odyssey*, and now I am among those whose hockey is their fortune."

After three months at Schwerin Sorley went to Jena University for the summer term. Describing this city, he compares its position at the foot of the hills with that of Ballater. In Germany, by much reading and attending the theatre, Sorley formed a very sincere admiration for Goethe, referring to *Faust* as being "far the greatest drama in the world." Before he left Schwerin, Charles had seen his twin-brother, Kenneth, installed in the house of the same kind family.

In June his parents visited Charles and together they toured Thuringia, the high-spot of which tour was an open-air performance of *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*. Sorley writes, "The Elizabethan spirit is not lost. It has only crossed the Channel and found a home in Germany. Every Thuringian peasant is a Bottom or a Quince . . . Shakespeare of the comedies *is* German." By this time he had discovered in his reading that, though German poetry might excel the verse of other nations, German prose was "like a stale cake compounded of foreign elements." So he returned all the more voraciously to Thomas Hardy and Richard Jefferies. In the previous September he had sat on Liddington Castle Hill reading Jefferies *Wild-life in a Southern County* which describes the country from that viewpoint, and had written:

"I see the vision of the vale
Rise teeming to the rampant Down,
The fields and, far below, the pale
Red-roofedness of Swindon town.
But though I see all things remote,
I cannot see them with the eyes
With which ere now the man from Coate
Looked down and wondered and was wise."

On July 26, 1914, Sorley wrote to his parents of demonstrations of "Down with the Serbs," rumours and new editions of the newspapers being published every hour. An Austro-Servian war seemed imminent, but little did Sorley realise what it was to mean to him.

A week's walking tour on the banks of the Moselle with a friend had been planned, to be followed by visits to Berlin and Schwerin at which latter town he was to meet his brother and return home with him. The walking-tour had been begun and on Saturday, August 1st, the two friends arrived at the village of Neumagen to be told the news and advised to return home through Luxemburg. The next morning they went by train to Trier, where they were arrested. Sorley wrote an article for *The Cambridge Chronicle* of August 14th recounting these adventures. The most suspicious evidence against them was that they had no hats. Sorley impressed on the police, however, that in England "the best people" did not wear hats. Released the same evening, the two set out for home by different routes, Sorley returning by way of Belgium, and on August 6th he arrived home.

No sooner was he home than Sorley applied to the University Board of Military Studies at Cambridge for a commission. Impatient at the delay, he made another application at Oxford, and had just made up his mind to go into the ranks when he was commissioned 2nd Lieutenant in the 7th Battalion of the Suffolk Regiment and went into training in camp at Churn in Berkshire. At the end of September he joined

his battalion at Shorncliffe near Folkestone. Of life there Sorley wrote, "I feel the lack of my usual interests pretty sharply; nothing to read all day and no time; when one thinks, one does so on the sly; and as for writing poetry in the Officers' Mess—it's almost as bold a thing as that act of God's in writing those naughty words over the wall at Belshazzar's Feast!"

Travelling from Churn to Shorncliffe on the same day as the special train returned to Marlborough with the boys, he wrote the poem which he subsequently entitled: "Whom therefore we ignorantly worship" at Paddington Station.

"These things are silent. Though it may be told
Of luminous deeds that lighten land and sea,
Strong sounding actions with broad minstrelsy
Of praise, strange hazards and adventures bold,
We hold to the old things that grow not old:
Blind, patient, hungry, hopeless (without fee
Of all our hunger and our hope are we),
To the first ultimate instinct, to God we hold.

They flicker, glitter, flicker. But we bide,
We, the blind weavers of an intense fate.
Asking but this—that we may be denied:
Desiring only desire insatiate,
Unheard, unnamed, unnoticed, crucified
To our unutterable faith, we wait."

Sending the first draft of this poem to a school friend, he wrote, "Not much trace of the origin left: but I think it should get a prize for being the first poem written since August 4th that isn't patriotic."

In a letter to the friend with whom he had been in the Moselle country when war broke out he wrote in October: "I regard the war as one between two sisters, between Martha and Mary, the efficient and intolerant against the casual and sympathetic. . . . But I think that tolerance is the larger virtue of the two, and efficiency must be her servant. So I am quite glad to fight this rebellious servant."

The Germans, too, were fighting for an ideal, and, with the remembrance of those happy days spent in Germany, Sorley could bear the individual no malice.

"You are blind like us . . . .
When it is peace, then we may view again
With new-won eyes each other's truer form
And wonder. Grown more loving-kind and warm
We'll grasp firm hands and laugh at the old pain,
When it is peace. But until peace, the storm
The darkness and the thunder and the rain."

Sorley had visions in November 1914 of just what would have to be done *after* the war was won. Just as in the second Great War the cry is "Win the peace!"; that the years of war must give birth to a new society different from that which was plunged into war in 1939, so it was clear to Sorley and many other young men that the world would never be the same after their great war as it had been at the beginning of the twentieth century; and it would be another generation and those who had stayed at home who would have the making of this new society—not the war-heroes. "I dread

the aftermath of war—what bores the survivors will be!"— they only *fought* the war. If he could have seen into the future—a year ahead—however, he need not have worried: though some might survive he, at any rate, was never destined to become a "bore."

In February 1915 Sorley went to Hythe for a musketry course. Taking a walk with his parents who were visiting him he suddenly stopped and pointed, "That's where Napoleon was beaten," he said, "at Sir John Moore's musketry school, and that's where the Kaiser will be beaten,—at Hythe."

While he was in training Sorley followed his usual practice of sending home bundles of poems from time to time. Sending a selection to his mother just before he left for France he wrote, "I like 'Le Revenant' best, being very interested in the previous and future experience of the character concerned . . ."

"He trod the oft-remembered lane
(Now smaller-seeming than before
When first he left his father's door
For newer things), but still quite plain.

(Though half-benighted now) upstood
Old landmarks, ghosts across the lane
That brought the Bygone back again;
Shorn haystacks and the rooky wood;

The guide post, too, which once he clomb
To read the figures: fourteen miles
To Swindon, four to Clinton Stiles,
And only half a mile to home . . . .

It seemed so unchanged and so still.
(Could it but be the past arisen
For one short night from out of prison?)
He reached the big-bowed window-sill,

Lifted the window sash with care,
Then, gaily throwing aside the blind,
Shouted. It was a shock to find
That he was not remembered there. . . ."

Just as the last poem savours slightly of A. E. Housman, so in some of Sorley's poetry the influence of Hardy and Meredith also—their finality and fatality—is very marked: for instance:

"Cast away regret and rue,
Think what you are marching to.
Little live, great pass.
Jesus Christ and Barabbas
Were found the same day.
This died, that went his way. . . .

On marching men, on
To the gates of death with song.
Sow your gladness for earth's reaping,
So you may be glad, though sleeping.
Strew your gladness on earth's bed,
So be merry, so be dead."

One of the saddest poems Sorley ever wrote embodies the unfulfilled story of "The Other Wise Man," the botanist who falls by the wayside,

"His hand had touched the plough: his eyes
Looked back: no more with us, his peers.
He'll climb the hill and front the skies
And see the Star, the King, the Prize."

On May 30th Lieut. Sorley went to France with his battalion and served near Ploegsteert. Soon after he went out to France the suggestion was made to him that he should publish a small volume of verse, but he put the thought on one side, regarding the moment as inopportune. "I have at present neither the opportunity nor inclination for a careful revision and selection. Besides, this is no time for oliveyards and vineyards; more especially of the small-holdings type. For three years or the duration of the war, let be."

By September Sorley had become a Captain and was looking forward to leave in the middle of October but, at the battle of Loos, on October 13, 1915, he was killed as his company was taking the "Hair-pin" trench near Hulluch.

In 1927 Humbert Wolfe created a stir in the literary world by the publication of *Requiem*, a series of poems written from the viewpoints of many of the 'Losers' and 'Winners' in life's great game; fifteen years earlier C. H. Sorley had written *A Tale of Two Careers*, being a song of 'Success' and 'Failure,' the two products of Marlborough—or of life. 'Failure,' perhaps, demands more of our attention; it is the age-old tale of the 'nonentity,' the shadow that "fell and left no trace," of whom and by whom the world is made, but who—capable of great love and loyalty—grows bitter as he sees his more gifted brothers taking all the limelight:

"We are the wasters, who have no
Hope in this world here, neither fame,
Because we cannot collar low
Nor write a strange dead tongue the same
As strange dead men did long ago . . . .

We are the shadow-forms, who pass
Unheeded hence from work and play.
We are today, but like the grass
That today is, we pass away;
And no one stops to say 'Alas!' . . .

We have seen others reap success
Full-measure. None has come to us.
Our life has been one failure. Yes,
But does not God prefer it thus?
God does not also praise success. . . .

The School we care for has not cared
To cherish nor keep our names to be
Memorials. God hath prepared
Some better thing for us, for we
His hopes have known, His failures shared."

When at school Sorley could never have been a "failure," a nonentity, and equally if he had lived he would have taken a prominent position of responsibility in one or other sphere. The loss to literature—*The Letters of Charles Sorley* prove that he was as happy in the medium of prose as in that of poetry—is great; had we not this selection of the outpourings of an impressionable young mind, the literary annals of the last war would be considerably poorer; but the greater loss was suffered, I believe, not by the literary world, but by the world of humanity, when C. H. Sorley died. He was filled with desire to serve his fellow-creatures—he had chosen social service as his *metier*; he would not, could not, have spent his life behind a desk, writing sonnets in an "escapist" frame of mind.

ATHALIE BUSHNELL.

[This is a continuation of the familiar studies by Miss Bushnell, lately of St. Andrew's University, which have been appearing irregularly in THE POETRY REVIEW prior to publication in volume form.]

Italian Harvester

A BIRD in the throat, in clean-cut pastures:
Swift you build a bridge from song:
And soon the nomads, men of Erin,
Travel with you, far and long.

Over the bridge your turning glances
Hold the gleams of a soft filled sky:
And now the light, with quick moth fancies,
Touches the shadow within your eye.

For not in our mild English meadows
Were you gendered, life begun:
But the land of olive wonder
Shaped your dreams beneath gay sun.

Not in shower of oak leaves hiding
Lover thrush, your infant cry:
Dark-eyed stranger, cease your plaintive
Old Venetian lullaby!

For the bridge spanned for your spirit;
Brings the lost sons, dumb and dear:
Reaper, we have given harvest
To your land, and you are here!

Oswaldtwistle. *Alice Miller.*

Krishna's Flute

THE POETRY OF SAROJINI NAIDU

THE conquest of India by the British must be ranked, in the hierarchy of world-changes, with the subjugation of the Western World by Rome. In the same way as the Latin language became the cultural vehicle of Christianity—the sacred vessel whence flowed the holy water of doctrine—so has the English language become the common medium of expression for the cultured of more than one great nation. The result for the world is incalculable. The waters of Vedic wisdom flow through the language which Shakespeare spoke, and a mighty mingling is brought about—of religion, of art, and of philosophy. It is with an instance of this confluence in art that I propose to deal.

Having learned this difficult language of ours—and learned it with an ease which sometimes amazes us, the cultured Indian began to employ it to express his thoughts, his ideals and aspirations. What he uttered, he recorded; and this was prose. But while engaged in the study of some of our great national classics, and with the memory of his own, perhaps, still fresh in his mind, he was tempted to embody his prayers and praises in verse—to endeavour to catch his flying fancies in the gem-net of poetry. This was a difficult undertaking. E. V. Lucas has written an amusing essay on the earliest of these pioneers. But in the end he succeeded, or perhaps we should say *she* succeeded; for the two most successful exponents of this assimilative poetic culture were women: Toru Dutt and Sarojini Naidu. It would be hard to imagine a greater contrast than that between the characters of these two daughters of modern India. Inflicted upon the former was an early and lamented death: a precocious genius, secluded from the crowd, obscure, while the latter is still vitally among us. The greater part of her life has been passed in the storm of politics, and in the full glare of public light. As this is not a comparative essay on the merits of the two poets we will not pursue the comparison further. Only in their song were they alike, in their love of India, and in their full and perfect Indian womanhood.

Sarojini Naidu* was born in 1879. Her father was Aghorenath Chattopadhyaya: she was thus one of a family which has given many brilliant sons and daughters to India. Her brother Harindranath was an accomplished and precocious poet; his first play being produced when he was only ten years of age, when his poetry had already won him appreciation. His political sympathies are strong, and he has recently published dramas in which the crudities of Socialism are incongruously mixed with the subtleties of Maeterlinckian symbolism.† His sister, however, has not allowed her politics directly to invade her verse. She married and had four children—to each of whom she addresses a stanza of a charming poem—and was subsequently bereaved of her husband; whom she had married in the face of strong opposition from her family (for he was of a lower caste). In public life for many years she has been an associate of Mahatma Gandhi, being imprisoned with him four times for defying the ordinances of the British Raj, in which exploit she displayed remarkable courage, and seems to have enjoyed doing so. Not only was she a prominent member of Congress, but she was so much a leader of men that she climbed into its presidential

* For fuller biographical details (this is only a sketch) see A. J. Symons' Introduction to *The Golden Threshold*; Anand's *The Golden Breath*; and *Sarajini Devi*, Ramula, Madras, etc.

† See *Five Plays*, Madras, 1937.

chair—the peak of every Indian Nationalist's ambition. She differs from most of her compatriots, however, in having a patriotism which is neither Muslim nor Hindu, but Indian. She travelled widely in the interests of her country, arousing enthusiasm wherever she went. She was for many years the centre of Indian social, political, and intellectual life, to say nothing of her literary influence, which is enormous. She created a sort of salon on the French model, to which flocked all the cultured of the age, including distinguished foreigners on tour. She was at the disposal of everybody. But sometimes, it must be confessed, she wearied of this brilliant life, and the cry escaped from her lips:

"O I am tired of strife and song and festivals and fame
And long to fly where cassia-woods are breaking into flame."

That longing was to remain with her all her life. It was in the service of her country that she gave up the simple things of human existence; she was unable to reconcile the two. Hers was no life of "languid and sequestered ease" such as was enjoyed by so many of the daughters of ancient India; and it was certainly no "revolving dream." Like Milton, for a while she sacrificed her song upon the altar of her country. This should never be forgotten. Her poetry is not the product of a woman cloistered from society and the world, as we are apt to imagine an Indian woman to be; but of one living in the midst of the rich activity of life, sharing it with others and enjoying it herself.

Although there is much of India in her poetry, there is but little politics—and here, too, is her impartiality shown. For not only is there a sonnet to Mahatma Gandhi, but a longer poem addressed to Mohammed Ali Jinnah also. It seems that Sarojini Naidu's poetry is chiefly the recreation of her hours of leisure, rather than the serious business of her life, hours in which she rose up from the deep waters of existence which encompassed her, and played on the surface for a while, laughing to see the sunlight as it sparkled on the waves and on the slow dance of the foam-flowers. Sometimes she even saw a rainbow; but sometimes she saw the storm flash its lightnings across the heavens. Then she descended into the deeps again, and answered the call. But the memory of the beauty she had seen was always with her.

A poet's sources may be divided into two classes: those having their roots in the past, in literature; and those having their roots in the present, in life. Not that the two indeed are wholly discrete; for at points they juxtapose and run into each other. But generally speaking a poet is influenced first of all by what he has read, whence comes his technique; and secondly by what he has experienced, whence comes his material. For with a precocious poet—and most poets are precocious—the library is at first a more familiar place than the world. Some poets, of course, stay in the library and never get any further, and are known as literary poets: they make good translators.

Like Toru Dutt, Sarojini Naidu drank deep from the wells of ancient heroic verse; the battles and loves of old India thrilled in her veins and made her heart beat faster. She sings of

". . . Valmiki's heroes bold—
Rubies girt in epic gold . . ."

And in another poem she collects in one great nosegay the names of all those flower-like women of old India who became famous through their devotion to love and duty

—such as Sita, Savitri, and Dvanpadi. Savitri it was who willingly would give up her own life to save her husband's, as related in one of Toru Dutt's finest poems, "Savitri." Sarojini Naidu never forgot how great India had been in the past, and there glorious and still-living examples of its ancient culture helped to remind her of it. Her dream is to revive in the future—or, if possible, *now*—the splendours of the past. But there is no mention of the weakness of the Indian people, as there is in Vivekananda; although she must have had bitter experience of it. For she is cast in the generous and heroic mould of the women of old whom she admires, and expects to find in others the same strength as she is conscious of possessing herself.

Sanskrit poetry, as such, and apart from its subject-matter, has influenced her own poetry but little. She retains a few traditional images, which it is the privilege of every poet to use, and this is all. Persian poetry, however, and the poetry of the colloquial languages, seems to have had slightly more influence upon her; although it is still not distinct enough to be traced to any particular poet or poets. She has translated a poem from the Persian of Zeb-un-Nissa, the white maiden of the Imperial Palace at Agra, whose fortunes afford good material to the historical novelist (if a second Myers is about to appear), and another from the Urdu: and one of her poems she entitles "A Persian Love Song." The influence of Sufism is easily discerned, especially in the last plaintive verse:

"Hourly this subtle mystery flowers anew,
O Love, I know not why . . .
Unless it be, perchance, that I am you,
Dear love, that you are I!"

In contrast with this is the frank and laughing naturalism of the "Rajput Love Song," with its charming refrain:

"*Haste, O wild-bee hours, to the gardens of the sunset!*
Fly, wild-parrot day, to the orchards of the West!
Come, O tender night, with your sweet consoling darkness,
And bring me my Beloved to the shelter of my breast!"

Mrs. Naidu is a poet in the full English poetic tradition; she is not afraid of comparison. Some of our modern poets seem to be making an effort to be as different from their predecessors as possible. Sometimes they succeed very well; but they must not call it poetry. Mrs. Naidu makes no such efforts; and the consequence is that she has an originality which is unmistakable. All the influences that are recognisable are superficial, and her verse would have been much the same as it is without them. Perhaps the deepest is traceable to Indian street-songs. There are traces that these "folk-songs,"* if indeed they may be so called, have had an influence upon her analogous to that of the Border-ballads upon Scott. They also afford a point of contact between her style and her material. For the streets and market-places, the bazaars and villages, where these songs were sung, occupy a prominent position in her pages. The whole gamut of her political activity—love of India—is stamped upon every page she wrote. It is the same thing, only in a different form. She did not commit her brother's (literary) mistake of trying to make one a medium for the other. *The Sceptred Flute* is a crowded canvas of Indian life; it tells us more about

* The 1st and 6th Parts of *The Sceptred Flute* are called Folk Songs and Indian Folk Songs respectively.

the country and its people than a whole library of travellers' books. And seeing them in the company of an Indian, and one who has the deepest interests of her countrymen continually in her heart, we are able to penetrate into their profoundest places, into that which makes them live—from the temporal, to the eternal; from the shadow, to the substance; from the image to the god which it represents. For not only does she sing songs of bangles and street-cries, of corn-grinders and palanquin-bearers, of spinning and Indian dances, of henna, wandering singers, and snake-charmers—the temporal side of life; but she sings, also, of the festivals of those special manifestations of the Eternal, the great religions. With deific impartiality she tells of the festivals of Hindus and Muslims alike; joins, for a moment, in the lamentation at the Imam Bara, where, in the month Moharram, the Shiah community wails for the deaths of Ali, Hassan, and Hussain; sings hymns to Kali, to Lakshmi, to Indra; lingers for a while in the Forest of Brindaban, and hears the music of the Divine Flute-Player, Sri Krishna; meditates for a while before an image of the Buddha, and recites the "Prayer of Islam." She can enter into all temples, and find the same God in every one; for every faith she has unfailing sympathy. This sympathy is not the result of an intellectual integration of the metaphysical features of each religion, as it is apt to be in the West; but of the realisation that they are all daughters—if only by adoption—of the one mother, India.

> "*Hindus:* Mother! the flowers of our worship have crowned thee!
> *Parsees:* Mother! the flame of our hope shall surround thee!
> *Mussulmans:* Mother! the sword of our love shall defend thee!
> *Christians:* Mother! the song of our faith shall attend thee!
> *All Creeds:* Shall not our dauntless devotion avail thee?
> Hearken! O queen and O goddess, we hail thee!"

These lines were recited, appropriately enough, at the opening of the Indian National Congress in 1915. If such a spirit continues to guide her statesmen, there is no doubt but that India will again be numbered among the great nations of the earth.

From the works of every poet there may be deduced, if not a philosophy, at least an attitude to life and its problems. That attitude—and ultimately it is a philosophy, too, and a religion—which characterises the poetic work of Sarojini Naidu may be defined, in a word, as *acceptance*. She accepts the whole of life in just the same way as she accepts the handful of special manifestations of it, the religious. This acceptance is not toleration, but a tasting of it, and a participating in it, as a personal experience. She is eager to live life, not merely to study it. When she was a child, she tells us, she prayed:

> "Give me to drink each joy and pain
> Which thine eternal hand can mete,
> For my insatiate soul would drain
> Earth's utmost bitter, utmost sweet."

Mere knowledge that these extremes of pleasure and pain exist is not enough to satisfy her craving for them; she must experience them all. Fame has been hers and love and laughter, and the sorrow of bereavement; and they have been hers more intensely than they come to most: for she is a poet. And what is the result of all this experience? What has she learned about life? In the explicit terms of philosophy no

answer is possible to this question; but we can quote a verse of one of her poems to help us:

"Tarry a while, till I am satisfied
Of love and grief, of earth and altering sky;
Till all my human hungers are fulfilled,
O Death, I cannot die!"

She is too conscious of the rich potentiality of life within her to be able to deny any of it; it must all bear fruit for her. And what then? This "Death" which creeps in at the last line, what is it, how does she define it? Like a true poet, she gives us no formal definition of it at all; but she does tell us of her experience of it. She sees life in death, and death in life, and God in all things; and this experience of life and death, of joy and pain, is the experience of God, although through a thousand veils.

The last and most remarkable part of *The Sceptred Flute* is entitled "The Temple, A Pilgrimage of Love," and is prefaced by the words, from Rabindranath Tagore:

"My passion shall burn as the flame of Salvation,
The flower of my love shall become the ripe fruit of Devotion."

There is nothing else like these poems in the whole range of English literature. They may perhaps be paralleled only by the songs of Chaitanya Deva and Ramprasad, or by some of the odes and ghazels of the Persian Sufi poets; but there is still a difference. She sees man, or *a* man, as God; whereas they see God as man, etc. This may appear to be a distinction without a difference; but anyone well acquainted with the mysticism of either East or West will recognise that this is not so. All that Sarojini Naidu has learned about life finds its completest and most perfect expression in these poems. All her previous joys, sorrows, anxieties and fears, with the whole gamut of her religious and emotional life, are found fused together in this one concept of Love. For her, like Dante, it is "Love which moves the sun in heaven, and all the stars." All her life is dedicated to Love; it is the whole of existence. And because it is the whole of existence it is possible to rise from the grosser to the finer forms of it; from love of man to love of God. It is essentially a process of sublimation. In Indian philosophy this is known as Bhakti-Yoga, which is the realisation of the Absolute God by devotion to Him in a personal form. This form may be that of a god, a teacher, a wife or child, or a lover. Indeed, some bhaktas assert that that love for God is highest which is typified by an illicit connection; and this element enters into Sarojini Naidu's poetry. For savage intensity, for the sense of surpassing ecstacy and complete abandon, we shall have to go a long way to find the equal of these poems. They are indeed a breviary of love. Towards the end of the collection she affords us a glimpse of how this process of sublimation is accomplished—by pain and suffering in "Invocation":

"Stoop not from thy proud, lonely sphere,
Star of my Trust!
But shine implacable and pure,
Serene and just;
And bid my struggling spirit rise
Clean from the dust!

Still let thy chastening wrath endure.
O be thou still
A radiant and relentless flame,
A crucible
To shatter and shape anew
My heart and will.

Still be thy scorn the burning height
My feet must tread,
Still be thy grief the bitter crown
That bows my head,
Thy stern, arraigning silences
My daily bread!

So shall my yearning love at last
Grow sanctified,
Thro' sorrow find deliverance
From mortal pride.
So shall my soul, redeemed, re-born,
Attain thy side."

Not only are these poems marked off from the others by their subject-matter, but by their style also; it is simpler, freer, and more direct. In her earlier poems we find a free, swinging rhythm, which can also be very subtle; a bold use of metaphor; a keen sense of the meaning, flavour, and balance of words, and a faultless ability to combine them into enchanting patterns. So perfect is her use of English that it ceases to be a compliment to attribute it to her. There is no unevenness, no failing of inspiration; evidently, only her best has been published. She is the poet of perfection, perfection of phrase, of line, of verse, and of the whole poem; she is thus eminently quotable. One of her devices is the use of a series of antitheses, which gives balance and precision to her poems. All these virtues are collected in her later verses; but here she is absolutely mistress of them all. There is no striving for effect, even though, before, she always strove successfully; everything comes easily and naturally, like a rush of words from the heart. But although they are not so highly-wrought as their predecessors, these poems are not unpolished. But here the finish is that of Velasquez, rather than of Le Brun. They constitute her undying legacy to posterity. Although her earlier works were known in England and America to a few discerning critics, such as Arthur Symons and Sir Edmund Gosse (he it was who first hailed the star of Toru Dutt rising on the horizon), and to a small public interested in the cultivation of English letters, her later poems are not so well known. It is hoped that these few lines of tribute from an admirer of her poetry and personality may serve to awaken interest in them. They would provide a useful discipline to some of the more unruly of our younger poets.

DENNIS EDWARD LINGWOOD.

Arthur Lynnford Smith (Wanstead) pays a warm tribute to "The Poetry Society's success in its incomparable mission during these days when spiritual things tend to be neglected; swamped as they might easily be, by products of gross materialism."

The Sleeping Princess

IN far forest, among thicket and bramble
the Prince had lost his hunting, horse and hound
lost beyond hope. What use to him was shouting
when walled massive trunks gaoled all sound?
On he stumbled, with ripped boots, flesh lined
with seams of red. Branches everywhere
were catkinned with skeletons in act to tear
asunder. The creeper twines about each spine
and through the twirled ribs green serpents stare.

Go back? Behind him trees, as lid over eye,
dropped down, blinding light. With sundry beast
the wood beside bulged monstrously—
leopard and lynx, boar and panther. Past
horrid bristly sides he brushed unharmed
while skeleton slid from branch to forest floor,
and floating through cobweb thickets came at last
to the open sky, where pillars of sycamore
held a marble palace viced in their firm jaw.

A palace of white marble, mountain-walled,
precipitous, ridged with dragon fangs
and domed with their fiery tongues; thereon installed
a brutal fox of copper wrought. Clang!
round in the wind he swung with eyes to scald
the intruding prince. Back he starts appalled
and flings from the palace away. But the whole wood
was driving beast, whose flood of eyes compelled
him back and backward. Turning, now in the porch he stood,

now in the hall, and the studded door swung to
and slammed. High up, the fox barked thrice,
ringing down to the cold chasms of ice
where he walked, by marble men and maids rough-hewn
as clouds, and serac images of kings,
a glacial home of snow and the blue-nail wind,
chill as the realm of the Snow Queen where Kay
was prisoned. With icy footfall echoing
onward he trod. A dim light beckoned him—this way!

This way! to a closed door whereat he knocks
and enters. O sunfall brimming beyond measure,
window to wave and glancing spray. He looks
where a hundred years have hid their secret treasure,
between forest and barren sea. Asleep she lay
among flowers of sleep; for her more than hundred years

no wrinkle—yet, was ever loveliness
sad as hers? He touched her velvet dress
silk-soft as kitten's ear, knelt, and kissed her awake.

But not wide awake, for she murmured snatches
from a dream of king and courtier drawing breath
slowly more slowly till like clockwork watches
they unwound and stopped—in a hundred years of death.
"Ogress, you mock me"—she turned brine-bitter eyes
away from his face—"you mock me with false lover."
But smiling he held her close. "It's no disguise.
O long lost, finally found one, none other
than Prince am I." "What would you lead me to?" she cries.

"To the wave beyond your window." She laughed at him.
"How long have I watched starfish and gull
and never three ships a-sailing by,
so empty the sea." "Soon it shall be full,"
he said, and told her how a promised sail
should carry them to his kingdom beyond the rim
of the sea. "Captain and sailors at my call
from rigging to the deck down shall drum
like apples in autumn. They'll steer us home, they shall not fail!"

"I wish it true. Life is a weariness—
the statue-frozen dead are more blest
than I. A monster ogress holds me firm
in her grasp, by devilish enchantment chained
to this couch. She with maddening caress
strokes me like a favourite cat. I squirm
in her arms remembering she turned to stone
my family, and let live one worm,
myself." "O say not so. You are no more alone."

The fox barked. "Whisht—she returns from hunting
and will be here at once. You must hide
in the deep drift of dead leaf outside
and lie still, secure from her enchanting
and from my fears. . . . The window's open!" she cried.
As he leapt, the palace thundered to the stride
of the monster and fifty leaden doors went dancing.
Now by her sleeping child her lower jaw
with its stonehenge of teeth gaped open like a drawer.

"Budge, drowsyhead! bestir! I scent
danger—did you hear my fox?" Puffing billy
sucked in her hollow cheeks until they met.
The Princess smiling bade her not be silly,

took in her lap the fibrous hump of head
and combed the matted hair. Willy-nilly
the monster yielded to that gentleness
as always she would; all the cares that cumbered
her heavy brow were conjured to a hog-snoring slumber.

To-morrow she went, as each day of her life,
to her hunting ground. And the Prince said, "As she passed
I might have caught her ankle and with my knife
stolen her breath." "'Twould not have been her last,"
said the Princess. "Her heart's blood is hidden
between the fox's scalding eyes, on the lofty
rooftop. Whoever would kill her is bidden
strike once nor let the blood touch earth—or fifty
ogres shall spring up and the world be monster-ridden."

It was that time of day between light and dark
when sound is etched on the senses sharp as trees
on the pale sky. Into the rustle of leaves
the Prince is creeping, when from the rooftop, hark!
the fox's thrice-repeated peril bark.
The palace thundered, leaden doors went dancing
as over the wood the monster furious-prancing
raced down the icy corridors, with stark
murderous talons shook the sleeping form entrancing.

"O you have fooled me, filthily beguiled!"
Straight from its hinges she upset the portal,
prepared to crush to death her darling child.
But again the fox barked—was the cry mortal?
Out she ran. Some puny prince had scaled
her parapet and climbed to the fox's lair.
She screamed. Her oak-root hair streamed for miles
as she launched at him into the battled air.
He dodged, but the blow pinned his shoulder to the tiles

as he struck—struck at the fox. Shadow and gutter
soaked up the dripping blood. That same stroke
had felled the monster with no shriek or mutter.
Up blew the vultures in stormy blackest flock
screeching from the wood, through beating lances
of rain, aloft to the racing welkin rack.
And the trees went down with a roar of branches
and splitting of boles; the huge earth cracked
the wood long—not a man in the world could mend that.

And the vultures fierce-descending set on her flesh
and picked her clean. . . . As a valley among snow peaks
that lies all morning drenched with mountain mist,

as the cool blue of the speedwell, so the Princess
to her lover. He curls close to her and speaks:
"Come young, come golden, O turn sunward flower
and grow in the sun with me. No more be seen
in frozen halls. Dearest, our days and hours
shall be floating clouds, as white, as silent, as serene."

The ice melted. Glaciers ran to rain.
Out of statues and a broken spell
stepped King and Queen and courtier. O the swell
of living rivers that flood in marble veins.
Rub the dust from your eyes, live and behold
man and maid with winged feet flying fast,
their beauty fadeless and their youth unpassed,
an endless Spring. Flowers the hundred-old
in kisses lain so long a winter immarbled, cold.

They ran to the rim of the sea, with heyday
and holiday and shouting company.
There were white dunes, a fair wind, and eyes
brimming with farewell; out to sea
ship at anchor, and a manned boat beside
making for shore (pray be gentle, tides,
bless their return). The Prince joyously
lifted his lass and wading the shallows cried,
"O sailors! O boisterous-buoyant waves, we are ready to ride!"

Ian Serraillier.

Windmill by the Sea

HE stands in marsh-light white and wide;
He sees the round clouds, luminous forms,
Piled on a leaden line of tide.
The old mill grumbles to the storms.

The spray is dashed about his eaves,
The salt dries in; at times his sail
Roars at the sky, till one believes
His speed is soul-mate to the gale.

He groans and cracks against the strain;
His timbers creak; yet pinned below
He sees the clouds, he thinks again
That way his great wings still must go.

The black clouds gallop down the sky
By reedy dyke, by muddy lea,
To where the wild geese curve and cry,
And the long sea-banks keep the sea.

He sees the vessels, first and least:
Great shadowy grain-ships, shabby things
That block the glimmer of the east
With the stained tatter of their wings.

He sees a wash of harbour tide,
The clop and chop that drums between
The quiet hulls that lie beside
The bobbing bell-buoys blue and green;

Wind-hunted smoke, and creaking thole,
The dinghys' wash, the churning track,
The flotsam flung against the mole,
The slanting funnels red and black;

The stormy flags, the loop, the flight
Of snow-wings flashing round a fort,
The hurdy-gurdy in the night,
Green lights, and laughter of a port.

One night in winter, when the fires
Are sinking in the homes of men,
Some moment when the tempest tires
And a great silence grips the Fen,

The housewife shall arise and say:
"The witches ride; I hear them croon;
The tide rolls up, the sedges sway,
The long dykes glimmer in the moon."

And mothers of the drowned reply,
"Look forth; at last the Mill has flown
Free on the wind, to sink, to die,
Out yonder where the ships go down."

Dorothy Wellesley.

THE GREENWOOD PRIZE FOR 1946

The Poetry Society is empowered by the executors of the late Mrs. Julia Wickham Greenwood to offer the sum of £20 as the Shirley Carter Greenwood Prize for 1946 for the best single poem in open competition addressed "The Greenwood Premium, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1," before July 1st; only one poem to be submitted by any one competitor, length not exceeding 250 lines; no previously-published poem may be entered; full name and address of author must be given on each poem and a stamped addressed envelope enclosed. (If a *nom-de-plume* is adopted, name and address of sender must be given in a closed envelope bearing the pseudonym.) The winning poem shall be printed in THE POETRY REVIEW and may be reprinted at the discretion of the Poetry Society and the adjudicator may reserve near winners for publication in THE POETRY REVIEW. This annual prize is assuming a high authority and significance, becoming the recognised premier annual award for poetry.

Kew Gardens after Rain

LOOK, goddess, at this Eden rinsed
By recent rain, now dark against
The sun's wet arm,
Each leaf an open palm
Shining with crystal charity dispensed,
The shaken stem
Breaking a diadem.

The lacquered emerald of each tree,
The blacker cedars; small clouds, see,
Hung out to dry
Against the harebell sky,
That slowly pass in sulky purity
Through gilt nets spun
About the anchored sun.

Breathe our earth-airs, Athene; are
They fainter than ambrosia?
Is not this pool
More coolly beautiful
Than Lethe?—these drenched roses lovelier far
Than all your pale
Olympian asphodel?

Richmond, Surrey. *Wrenne Jarman.*

Huntsham Wood, 1944

THE solitude of trees embraces me
Tenderly as a lover. Closer wreathe
Cool arms of joy! ah, nearer, tenderly,
Wind me with wordless ecstasy, and breathe
Dear quiet on the tumult of the soul.

Oh, calm beyond belief! Nor stir nor sound,
Only the lifted rapture that for this
Rich consummation, to enchanted ground
Blinded with joy I come, to claim my kiss
And marriage perfected of whole with whole.

Breathless and hushed I wait the accomplished hour;
Beloved hands of quiet fondle hair
And lips and brow; the buds of silence flower
Into slow beauty; under my hands the bare
Sweet limbs of peace quiver with joy unspoken.

My heart with peace moves, wedded side by side
In lovely marriage, and forgotten war

Mars not our Eden . . .
Sudden the warplanes ride
Over my trees of silence. Oh, no more
Find we earth's solitude—the sweet dream's broken.

Par, Cornwall. *Joan Arundell Gaved.*

A Song of Birdlip

O WHO has lived at Birdlip
And has not learned to know
There are fewer ills among the hills
Than in the plain below,
That a thousand reasons urge your stay
For one that bids you go?

How often, up in Birdlip,
The morning sings aloud
On cliffs that boast their ancient coast
Lapped by a sea of cloud.
Above—a bowl of gossamer,
Beneath—a misty shroud.

It's quiet, too, in Birdlip
When evening draws her veils
And all that wakes the woods and brakes
Are choirs of nightingales
Thrilling the moon-washed middle night
With song that never fails.

And since I lived in Birdlip
I've travelled east and west,
Yet ne'er, I wot, found place or plot
But Birdlip was the best;
And when my wanderings are done
In Birdlip I would rest.

Painswick, Gloucestershire. *Edgar Proudman.*

The Abbey, Glastonbury

WE are the echoes, and to us is given
The keeping of the hours that Time has tolled.
We are the echoes of a hundred years,
And thrice a hundred years these walls were old.
The past is ours, we care not for to-day
Until its music falls into our care,
And, had we tongue, what music could return
To thrill with melody the mildewed air.
War has been ours, the glory and the pain,
We have known clash of arms, and steel on steel,

The blare of trumpets, and the hush of death,
The shout of victory, and the mourning peal.
We have heard prayers at dawn and evensong,
Prayers for the safety of a warring host,
And then have gathered to our keeping fast
The murmured grief of those who loved them most.
Within these walls a vanished organ sleeps
That once with music thrilled the laden air,
The hands that called it forth sleep, too, within,
Only the echoes of the music linger there.
And nettles, growing on a shadowed tomb,
Stand guard on what was once an upright man.—
We can remember when, with staggering feet,
And lisping baby prayers his life began.
The sleeping organ bridal music played,
We guard with jealous care the long-dead strain,
We gathered up the maid's soft-whispered sigh—
They all are gone, the past comes not again.
The bird-like voices of the golden boys
Who sang, fresh-faced and young beneath the dome,
The quavering chant of hoary men and old,
These all are ours, the echoes are their home.
To you, this seems but space and crumbled stone
Where crows and jackdaws hold their own wild sway,
The chancel steps are overgrown with moss,
And weeds creep up the nave of yesterday,
But we, the echoes, know what you forget,
That this is still the home of God and prayer,
And, if you listen, sometimes you may catch
A chanting, faint upon the evening air.
Put off your shoes. This still is holy ground,
Though ivy is the altar-cloth, and night
Alone lights candles, hoping men will pray.
The shadows reach through the uneasy light—
Kneel, traveller, raise your face toward high heaven,
The cool night wind will barely touch your cheek,
But you will know these walls are hallowed yet,
And sanctuary still to those who seek.
Thus, go your way, take strength and hope, and pass.
We shall remain to glean your whispered prayer
That it may live. Few prayers we gather now,
No music but the night-birds and the air.
To-morrows are your own, to make or spoil,
To fill with stubble or to plant with flowers.
Pax Vobiscum! We care not for to-day—
We are the echoes, and the past is ours.

Romford, Essex. *Nesta Martin.*

Westminster Bridge, 1945

NO mountain lines are here to map the sky,
Nor rolling carpet turf to soothe the eye:
And strangely warbled songs arouse the ear,
The clash of traffic and the hum of gear.
Yet even here the fire of Beauty shines,
Here where the burdened human spirit pines,
Slave to its cunning toys: how great this arch,
Up curving to support the traffic-march!
Great the tectonic piles to left and right,
The looming, inky sentinels of Night!
Light is a fairy—in the depths below
Her quivering shafts of gold and azure glow:
Aloft with sparkling dust of stars she flies,
Sowing the darkness with a thousand eyes.

Stromness, Orkney. *John Cook.*

Annunciation to a Lover

BECAUSE time has a custom with all beauty,
and fruitful bone and vision fail alike
for lack of air; because the highwalled city
is a world ahead and you have roads to make,
and wounds to heal with more than lovers' minds
or hearts can ever spare; because you have
a frozen continent to cross, marsh lands
to reclaim beyond the frontiers of your brave
and lovely kingdom, where the singing years
are yours to squander recklessly upon
incorrigible winds, or cast, when spires
are speechless, into a golden carillon
to ring defiantly in temples known
only to the young who follow a star:
but so much more than these, because you run
like turnstones at low tide upon the shore,
flicking aside sea-pebbles and the tufted
grass in your inchwise wisdom, seemingly
oblivious of marauding gulls, those many-gifted
hoverers, . . . and waters where exiled lie
the dreaming ribs of lovers lately lost—
I must come a Gabriel to interpret
the secret quickening, the unquiet ghost
tampering with your vein to vindicate
the culture of wings and the leper's kiss.

I am your bellman with a sheath of fires
you never can extinguish, for my voice
is allman's and my words his tongueless tears.

Howard Sergeant.

Danger Imminent—Danger Past

IF this is danger,
Danger of death,
What do I stand to lose?
—Body and breath.

What other menace
Turns the heart cold?
—Injury, agony,
Horrors untold.

What more disaster?
What more despair?
—Loss of the finest,
The loved and the rare.

Who will give comfort?
How shall I pray?
—God will not intervene,
Time will not stay;

In the last peril
Man is alone.
Yet in this moment,
Fearful, alone,

While apprehension
Knocks at the heart,
Death's sombre curtains
Are riven apart—

Bright as a sword-flash
Sudden I see
TRUTH, the immortal,
Naked and free!

Pride of possessions,
Fruits of the mind,
Desire and illusion
Together enshrined,

All these were shadows
Veiling the light.
Now doth Eternity
Burst on my sight,

Voyage and haven,
The source and the end;
Go Life, with thy terrors,
Come Death—as a friend!

Diana M. Moore.

Silence

SILENCE there was between us—in the air
Our last words hung like smoke—and then were gone,
Going as flames with a soft dying flare,
Or trilling echoes when a song is done.

Silence there was, yet silence was there once,
More tranced than summer in the golden noon,
More spelled and splendid than the glittering frost
Beneath the ageless silence of the moon.

Within your arms silence of unscaled peaks,
Small silences of flowers, or plumbless well,
Of star, of pause in bird's song—of the breaks,
In chimes between a crystal-sounding bell.

Silence there was between us—and there came
Ghosts of past silences—I scarce could bear,
Almost my lips were pleading on your name,
Almost my hands were stretched towards your hair.

When in my heart's most deep and secret core
Silence I knew for love that was no more.

Ellodē Collins.

Vision

THERE was a shining wind upon the hill
A sudden wind that brightened all the air.
And I was purified, made free
Made luminous and passionless until,
Of self itself divinely unaware
We ran, the wind and I, with sudden glee
Down to the undivided sea.

I rose, and moving integral I stood,
The hills above me and the sea below.
But there were heights as yet unwon
For evil lusted at the heels of good
And hate made echo in the deeps of woe;
Illusion boasted of a journey done . . .
I let them fall, and lo! the sun.

And then I saw, below yet here I saw
The myriad earth in motion. Trees and men;
Then no more trees and men, or sound
Of difference, but one, that to a law
Of its own being slow revolved, and then
The trees were trees again, and soon I found
That men were men, with splendour crowned.

I looked towards the sky, and it was here,
And all creation as a golden stream
Ran singing down, and turned, a wide
And clouded river. Half it rose, and fear
Lay on the sullen waters with a gleam
Of stillness, for at navel depth it died,
And woman-man was crucified.

The earth and air gave patient audience,
(The eyes above, the feet nailed to the clay).
The waters moved, and from the night
Came life, self-conscious and aware, immense
And jewelled with the lamps of night and day.
And self was on the median way, with light
And dark the mirror ways of sight.

I struggled and desire held me, cried
Aloud and self alone made answering.
I suffered, knew the bonds of hell
Then rose upon the waters sanctified.
I sang and heard the choirs of heaven sing.
And then a voice, cold as a temple bell,
"Thou fool! That way the angels fell."

There was a shining wind upon the hill,
A sudden wind that brightened all the air.
And I that know my bonds am free,
A sworded regent at the throne of will,
Of Self itself divinely more aware.
We ran, the wind and I, with sudden glee
That shed, for just a moment, me.

Christmas Humphreys.

Still Life

(Op. 27: No. 1)

WHITE flower of Lombardy
Let me see your eyes,
White passion-scented flower
Where honey lies!

The moths have their covert cell,
The bees their hive,
They store their fragrance
And all day strive

And all night rest
That the trumpet flower
May ring in the muted
The starlit hour

With a child's passion
And an adult's tears,
The bees' persistence,
The soft moth's fears.

For the quivering of stamens
In dawn passion
Is child's laughter,
But cold, ashen,

The fall of dew
On the broken petal,
The curled lash,
The frangible metal

of silk and wire
That lifts to the sky
A round of silver
And of love would die,

Or of scented wine
of Mandragora
That brims her cup
Yet is not for her

Nor for you my flower
of the Northern plain,
Calling the night-moth
Again and again.

For he dances all night
With crested wings
In the bubble of fragrance
But never sings

As the bee sings
His storm of sound
That binds the sun
To the burning ground.

How can one bind
The cool white flower
My foolish moth
In the starlit hour?

Ask the bee,
He will never tell,
He knows the ropes
Of the sun and well

He knows the boisterous
Sails of the day;
But he hears not the lutes
Of night when they play.

Those lutes, my flower
With their sad, thin strings
Echo in you,
But they bind his wings.

T. W. Ramsey.

Poets in Uniform

Morning creeps towards the Nissen Huts.

DAILY the ruin of the breakfast table
Straggles across our vision.
Winds of song
Weave their magic
Among the clattering of plates
And idle chattering.

Only the ice and fire of thought
By music rarefied
Can bring us to the brink of song.

Daily we march to work,
Casting our shadows
Into the puddles,
Casting the shadow of our thoughts
Along the avenues of dream.
Will they find
A pathway rich with leaves?

Have we learnt
To value each day
As the first that we shall live?
To welcome suffering
As necessity for song?
To open all our doors
On every wind of feeling?
And begun
To render up the beauty we have found?

We look constantly
Out of the window;
Smoke from the Disinfestor Station
Muffles the sky.
Our ink and books
Lie on our desks,
But walls and weeds
Measure their strength
Against the light.

A mist obscures
Where our own rivers flood
Into the universal sea of thought.
The tide returning brings
Treasures among the flotsam.
What is beyond?

Noon hovers above the Nissen Huts

A coming storm
Ruffles the silences,
Rustles the poplar leaves,
Unbends the ivy round the window sill.
All moving things become
Part of the sky,
And birds fold in their wings.

Can ice and fire
Give back their song?

Mists of fern
Fall on the shadows of grass.
Hand and shadow travel over the page
Weaving their patterns
Of music and echo.
Shadows of song
Curve over each other
In the sky.

Where does the singing lead?

Lapwings pierce the day with song
Sharply, as the bare boughs
Strike the air.
The last high-waving leaves
Remind us Autumn has not gone,
Spring is to come.

Evening crawls towards the Nissen Huts.

Pte. S.M.E., Ripon. *Margery Smith.*

Sonnet on the Sonnet

A SONNET is a posy neatly tied;
A picture painted for a tiny frame;
A stave of bird-song, never twice the same;
A dainty garland for a summer bride.
But sometimes it has been a voice that cried
From out the wilderness, and put to shame
Cruelty and wrong; or left an humble name
Jewelled by its praise, and all but deified.

This was the lyre of Petrarch; Dante knew
The range and compass of this instrument,
And struck great chords in Christian Italy.
Then our immortal Swan of Avon drew
His hand across its strings and straightway lent
It native magic, poignant, surging, free.

T. M. Auld.

Experience

WHAT is the flesh? The thinnest of all veils,
Through which the spirit shines, scarcely dimmed,
scarcely diffused, rather revealed.
A veil which sometimes trembles and is dispersed
That, naked spirit to naked spirit, in one gleam
Our souls may meet and be still,
Unite and be healed:

That joy may pass
From one to the other, and strength
Be born of joy, and beauty of thought and act
Be achieved in the strength born of our spirit's union—
Twofold beauty like shot silk, twin strands.
Where is the veil that now shall give fruition pause?
Where the limiting means to our communion?

. . . . . .

Lay thou thy hand upon my heart
As I on thine,
And learn there all I would impart
But cannot shape to speech or written sign—
Myself, no longer scattered into words
But integrate; not muffled in design
Of pride or shame but naked to the touch.
Let every current that stirs there, little or much,
Travel thy nerves; let every thought of mine
Rise to thy hand, a silent flock of birds
That wing and settle as one. So thou to me
Dost yield thy spirit's import, silent and free;
So to my heart thy love; so to my hand
Thy need comes winged to bid me understand.

. . . . . .

The mask became a face, and in that face
Feeling and thought that travelled with my own
To realms which hitherto seemed mine alone—
Realms beyond time and space
Where I had wandered lonely, never seeing
Even the footprints of another being
Until you said "I know that country well—
That is my home." "So it is mine," said I,
"Those mountain summits, that enfolding sky,
The clear high tenderness of dale and fell."

So we are fellow-countrymen who turn
Homeward together, seeing far away
Beyond the narrow limits of the day
The self-same stars above the same horizon;

Who hear the music of the self-same burn;
Who tread the self-same hills; who live and learn
The same hard tasks in the same secret places.
Is it so strange to find ourselves akin
Now that the masks have fallen from our faces?

Christina Chapin.

For One Killed in the Blitz

WHEN in that time the street-lamps shine and when
The London night is neon-starred again
I shall remember then

You that were lithe and lovely, now that wear
Blood for a garment, dust in your radiant hair,
Dust in your void eyes' stare.

These stoic days shall buttress not for ever
The heart now steeled, and pain when these bonds sever
Find surcease never.

Now is the hour of cold and burnished hate:
I, corporate in cosmic strength, await
Solitude ultimate.

This is the winter of the world, to be
Transmuted to a Springtide travesty
Without Persephone.

Michael Delarche.

Fantasy

NOW, to all ecstasy, to all delight
The little stars unfold their petals;
The clouds sing to the ragged moon
As over the earth the grey veil settles
And the moss-dusted bloom of night
That the sun will disturb too soon.

Now does the little owl invade the dark
With tales of fantasy and fear
And the cypress laughs in the chill air,
While in the deep shadows the timid deer
Turn and lift up soft pale eyes there
And paw with white hoofs the bark.

And the crimson unicorns leap on the hills;
The mottled phoenix flies from the ashes
Into the dust of the summer night,
And in the silver-fingered rushes
The fire-eyed moths where the moonlight spills
Weave their strange mystic solemn rite.

C. Busby Smith.

Smith

(Clerk for fifty-five years in the firm of, etc.)

YOU are dead, Mr. Smith.
Slowly they bear your coffin down the street,
Street that no more will know
Your morning anxious, your evening weary feet.

No bell (bell awaits the invader)
Tolls a mourning monotone.
No friend, no kinsman follows,
Unattended you go and alone.

Alone, did I say?
No, not alone, Mr. Smith.
In their thousands the young, the splendid, the brave
Hail you comrade in death.

Smith, descendant of smiths.
Workers in iron and steel; swart men who with anvil and hammer
Beat ploughshare in peace, sword and cannon in war,
Forge filled with flying sparks and battering clamour

Claim you their son. Young eagles who stormed at heaven's ramparts,
Soared, battled and fell (fierce was the test of their mettle),
Gather around, you can hear the beat of soft wings
And voices vowing you bore your share of the battle.

Who knew no steel but the pen. Old, frail
(Oh, but steel in your heart), they asked, and you heeded
Their asking; yielding only to death
Forged them the weapons they needed.

I. M. Mills.

To My Wife

GOD gave this grace on which not time nor chance
Nor any mortal ill shall leave a scar,
For hers was not that brief inheritance
Which time may wither or the tempest mar.
Evil befell, but though the flesh was weak
The spirit triumphed, and the light of truth
Lies like a bloom upon her ravaged cheek
And sweeter than the loveliness of youth.
There were no trumpets for this victory,
Won in the secret places of her soul,
Nor any prize save that serenity
Which now with healing magic makes her whole;
And we who love her reap what she has sown
For all our grief has vanished with her own.

A.

Will He No Come Back Again?

Written in memory of Prince Charles Edward Stuart, for the Bicentenary Commemoration of the "45," which was held at Glenfinnan, on August 18, 1945.

SURELY some praise should aye be softly said
Of one whose cause and honour ran so high,
Whose youthful mien was pledged and nobly wed
To Chivalry; whilst Truth prescribed his eye;
A dream of better things from far-off lands
Of soulful stature and divine assay
Came with this Prince,—the soul still understands
The mystic meaning of a longed-for day.
Nor Gladsmuir's triumph nor Drummossie's grief
Can rightly gauge the light these dreams can show;
In memory's casket lies a golden sheaf
Which only the white mists of Scotland know;
And in the heather, o'er the loch and fell
This message lives and must for ever dwell.

Arthur Row.

Hand-clasp

EVENING had come, and with it some reprieve
For tensely keyed-up nerves. Swift into space
Sped that fantastic hour of make-believe
With no words uttered but the commonplace.
Then at my gate you grasped my outstretched hand
And pressed it all too fervently and well—
Gesture that I alone could understand,
Revealing all your lips had failed to tell.

Too late, too late! With heavy hammer blows
My heart beat out the melancholy dirge,
Shatt'ring the last frail barricade that rose
Wildly to bar despair's impassioned surge.
My fate lay in that hand-clasp. Ne'er should I
Hear those unspoken words . . . Good night . . . Good-bye.

Editha Melbourne.

Word-Hunger

SO having done with you I shall be free
To take new paths, to look on changing views,
To turn on springing heel, no more to be
Your white flat page or pen you scarcely use.
I shall have done with patience and may choose
Some lesser virtue grown from ground less bleak—
Yet if you summon me, compelling Muse,
Even to-night, I shall be swift and meek,
For my long hunger's sake enthralled until you speak.

Jane Scott Parsons.

Dynamics of American Poetry: CIX

Henry Powell Spring, professor of comparative literature and free lance writer in the field of human science, is of American parentage and early New England ancestry. He received his primary education abroad and at Worcester Academy, later receiving his B.A. degree at the University of Vermont, his M.A. and Ph.D. at Columbia University, New York. He pursued graduate studies at Harvard University, Leipsig and the Sorbonne, and this preparation causes him to be called author, educator and lecturer.

In World War I he was a first lieutenant in the Reserve Officers' Training Corps and assistant military instructor in R.O.T.C. He was acting head of the Department of German at the University of Vermont, and later lecturer in French at Trinity College. In New York University he was a lecturer in French, and in Bronxville, N.Y., at the Sarah Lawrence College, he established its Department of World Literature. In 1932, returning to Europe, he became the Founder-Director of International Academy. He has received many acknowledgments of his brilliance and I am glad to read that he is Regional Director of the League for Sanity in Poetry.

There are some sixteen volumes to Powell Spring's credit; the titles suggest a depth and importance, such as: *Philosophic Fables, Challenge to Think, What is Truth?*, etc. *Question and Answer* is striking:

"To-day the Bill of Rights remains unheeded,
The blackest threads are woven on the loom
Indeed—the tears of all earth's stricken people
Appear to spell unalterable doom.
Are not the words with blood and hate encrimsoned?
Are not the theories with ink scarce dry?
Are not the prayers that storm the gates of Heaven
Enough to win the day? I ask it—I!

Must Satan flout for ever all that's sacred?
Must Death for ever still the breaking heart?
Must hatred ever fan the flames of hatred?
But now I think—and reason has no part."

Mr. Spring has also sent us a very compelling volume entitled *The Spirit of Literature*, one of the best and most complete considerations of the subject that these days have brought forth. I must content myself in this review by simply giving the titles:

I. The Stream of Literature: 1. Oriented Occident; 2. Religion, Science and Art; 3. Literature and Destiny. II. The Geography of Literature: 1. The Flavor of Italian Letters; 2. The Flavor of French Letters; 3. The Flavor of English Letters; 4. The Flavor of Germanic Letters; 5. The Flavor of American Letters. III. The Spiritual Dimension of Literature: 1. The Art of Homer; 2. The Wisdom of Mythology; 3. The Blight of Analytical Thinking; 4. Nihilism in Literature. IV. The Healing Power of the Word: 1. Homer and Dante; 2. Shakespeare and Goethe; 3. Victorious Literature. In the Conclusion this author gives us the following paragraph:

"The question is frequently asked just what is the criterion of great literature. Should it be classic or romantic, esthetic or descriptive, critical or philosophical,

naturalistic or realistic, poetic or merely natural? The answer is that if literature is to reflect life it must include every one of these categories. The same force which moves life itself moves all great literature. Great literature is a ground-swell experience. If literature is merely esthetic, or instructive, or aims to do no more than help while away an idle hour, we cannot apply to it the designation 'great.' It must have three qualities in the main: it must reflect heart-understanding, it must be thought-provoking, and it must be dynamically constructive in its purpose." To all of which we say Amen, and again Amen!

Gwendolin Brooks with marked talent in her first book, *A Street in Bronzeville*, Poetry reflecting negro life in a great American city (Harper & Bros.), describes easily the people of the city. The genial man about town, the queen of the blues, the modest madonna, the preacher, the hunchback, all reach us in ballad form. Born in Topeka, Kansas, educated at Englewood High School and Wilson Jr. in Chicago, she has lived since in Chicago. Let us become familiar with her graphic gift:

"I hold my honey and I store my bread,
In little jars and cabinets of my will.
I label clearly, and each latch and lid
I bid, Be firm till I return from hell.
I am very hungry, I am incomplete,
And none can tell when I may dine again.
No man can give me any word but Wait,
The puny light, I keep my eyes pointed in;
Hoping that, when the devil days of my hurt
Drag out to their last dregs and I resume
On such legs as are left me, in such heart
As I can manage, remember to go home.
My taste will not have turned insensitive
To honey and bread old purity could love."

There runs the racial problems with pathos through these poems. We quote one stanza from "Negro Hero" (to suggest Dorie Miller):

"I had to kick their law into their teeth in order to save them.
However, I have heard that sometimes you have to deal
Devilishly with drowning men in order to swim them to shore.
Or they will haul themselves and run you to the trash and the fish beneath.
(When I think of this, I do not worry about a few chipped teeth.)

And again let us read "Piano after War":

"On a snug evening I shall watch her fingers,
Cleverly ringed, declining to clever pink,
Beg glory from the willing keys. Old hungers
Will break their coffins, rise to eat and thank.
And music, warily, like the golden rose
That sometimes after sunset warms the west,
Will warm that room, persuasively suffuse
That room and me, rejuvenate a past.

But suddenly, across my climbing fever
Of proud delight—a multiplying cry.
A cry of bitter dead men who will never
Attend a gentle maker of musical joy.
Then my thawed eye will go again to ice.
And stone will shove the softness from my face."

Mrs. Hazel Griffith Davis writes me that she is living the busy life of a Kansas farmer and is now caring for two small boys, seven and eight years old, who are temporarily out of a home. She longs to go with her husband to visit London and "the land of my ancestors—Ireland and Wales." Her pamphlet of lyrics, *Darkness to Dawn* (Chapman and Grimes), is pleasing and indicative of the great enjoyment to be had from life for those who find it.

Those who have lived through the first world war and have had unfortunately to pass through a second world war, cannot but find *The War Poets*—An Anthology of War Poetry of the Twentieth Century, edited by Oscar Williams (John Day Co., N.Y.), of great value. In it we find the stirring pens of Hardy, of Rupert Brooke, of E. E. Cummings, Siegfried Sassoon, Seeger, W. B. Yeats, but we find almost all the poets are belonging to the Infantry, the Air Force and the Navy. We also find the women represented by drivers, etc. Let us tell you of Oscar Williams, the editor of this comprehensive collection. Mr. Williams's poetry has appeared in the best of our monthlies, and in England as well. He is author of two published books of poetry, the second of which, *The Man Coming Toward You* (Oxford University Press), has been favourably compared with the work of Auden, Wallace Stevens and Dylan Thomas, and of a third volume, *That's All That Matters*, which has just been issued by the Creative Age Press. An additional interest to the book are the many photographs—15 pages, 6 portraits to a page.

In a slim volume, *Love is a Terrible Thing* (The Hobson Press, New York City), Beatrice Murphy gives us an understanding of the singing quality of her words, as illustrated by "Promise":

"Some day when spring
Has waked the sleeping earth
To life anew
And all the air is heavy
With the perfume of flowers.
My heart shall waken too
And I shall sing a song
More beautiful
Than ever sung before.

Here on the grave
Of broken hopes and buried loves
My heart shall give birth
To love more rich and full
Than ever graced my door . . .
They say the dead make fertile earth!"

This writer tells me she has been writing poetry since High School days, appearing in numerous anthologies of poetry, and that she is a negro and has edited an anthology of poetry by young negro writers in 1938, and is now at work on the study of the poetry of her race.

In *The Soul of a Poet*, by Allison Nichols Johnn-St. Johnn (Meador Publishing Co., Boston), we find some long and very stirring free line poems about the war. "Lights Out" this poet dedicates to the heroes of World War II. These heroes, both sung and unsung, and to the civilians who were unable to defend themselves, the helpless aged, the frenzied women and the terror-stricken children mowed down by machine-gun fire, bombs, etc. This poem takes us, step by step, through the fearful history all the way to the rattlesnake of Far-East make, Japan.

Why struggle to say what the jacket of *Country Road*, by Leone Rice Grelle (Macmillan Co.), has so admirably said?—"It is the poetry of wind and weather, and of seasons; and of the moods and dreamings kindled in a listening heart by the whims of sky and forest. Lamplight is here; and wood-smoke; and the good smell of damp earth at spring ploughing. Here is the snug security of The Long Kitchen, and the gentle, easy singing of an August noon; the drum of rain on a gray old barn, and a stone-choked pasture at lambing time." This author lives at Mt. Carmel, Connecticut, and was born nearby in Wallingford. She is pictured with her favourite hunter, on the jacket, and seems to know horses as well as she knows us. Very characteristic is the following delightful lyric—"*Forget If You Will*":

"Forget if you will the lamplit night
And the winding path to the fern-cool well
And the pasture acres, the meadow mile,
Or the slanting hills where the sunsets dwell—

Forget the brook where the cattle strayed
Neath the great low arms of the willow trees;
Forget the morns when the mowers sang,
Or the quiet snow fell; oh, forget all these

If you will, if you must, as you strive to climb
In your fight to live, in your zeal to win—
But you'll never forget the stars you knew,
Or the little old road where the spring marched in."

American Child, by Paul Engle (Random House), comprises 64 sonnets, written to the author's small daughter. This lovely book leaves no kind of doubt as to whose child this is,—American's child.

"Lucky the living child born in a land
Bordered by rivers of enormous flow:
Missouri talking through its throat of sand,
Mississippi wide with ice and snow,
A country confident that day or night,
Planting, ploughing or at evening rest,
It has a trust like childhood, free of fright,
Having such powers to hold it east and west.

Water edged with willow gray or green
Edges the hours and meadows where she plays.
Where the black earth and the bright time are piled
She lives between those rivers as between
Her birth and death, and is in these bold days
A water-watched and river-radiant child."

Of course this darling child mirrors the years, as we all do, and we find her understanding growing:

"The boy next door came over with his bear
(Made of brown cloth and mounted on four wheels),
She got her favorite doll (it had one ear
Missing, but danced by springs hid in its heels).
Their play went on, half silly and half solemn.
She took from him, he gave to her, delight.
And in that room their talk climbed like a column
Of smoke from a house where all was warm and right.

Then each gave each the loved toy, and with such
Ease, as if they knew in this one motion
That love, which is at first the bitter will
To live by taking, each from each, word, touch,
Grows in its fulness to the better will
To give, by each to each, depth, calm, devotion."

Edith Tatum in *Hills of the Spirit* (Kaleidograph Press, Texas) is described as a clubwoman, singer and speaker, as well as an author and poet. At this writing it appears all pursuits have given way to the literary.

Reader, do you welcome as I do a book of poems in large type? I have always failed to see why small type denotes poetry.

We pause at "Sailor Wives," giving the last stanza:

"That was a burnished day before you sailed
And left me here alone upon the shore.
Here I still wait, beside a sullen sea.
The wind is cold, the angry breakers roar;
Their icy spindrift stings my lifted face.
The gulls are circling overhead, their cries
So harsh, yet plaintive, speak to me of ships
Long overdue, and tears are in my eyes.
Deep sadness rises from my lonely heart,
And I send prayers into the distant blue
For all brave sailormen, remembering
How many other wives are waiting too."

In how far, reader, do you think the poet is privileged to record that which is not true? Now that is a large order when we stop to think of the religions of the world. A short poem, entitled "No Darkness Lasts" follows:

"These quiet days suggest deep purple grapes,
Nut trees that lavishly their colors spill,
Tall grasses quivering where the quail are hid
And fragrant smoke that drifts across the hill.

We climb the summit, watch the sun sink low
Into the outstretched, waiting arms of night,
While peace enfolds our hearts and promises
No darkness lasts, but soon returns the light."

Are you beginning to know Miss Tatum? Let us quote from a long poem entitled "Stradivarius":

"Across the sultry, crowded room
I listened to your violin.
The notes were fawn's feet,
Stepping lightly through a cool, green glade.

I met your eyes above the insensate throng—
And then I understood.
In some dim past, within a hidden glade,
Soothed or tormented by the wind and rain,
I was the hamadryad of a tree
From which your violin was made."

Mr. Donald Parsons who writes the foreword to the volume of poems *Forty Shillings*, by Ruth Crary (James A. Decker) is quite delightful. He fearlessly coins the word "the slovenly school" in the very face of the modern writers. A paragraph is too good to lose:

"Now I do not quarrel with experiment. In the laboratory, it is the hand-maid of progress. Remember this, however; the sciences are progressive, as Hazlitt points out, and grow like coral, fact upon fact. Not so the arts. We shall never improve on Raphael. Homeric science is benighted; as poetry, the Iliad is as modern as a motor. . . . I like this poetry. I like its adherence to a venerable tradition. I like it because it prefers even an end-stopped line of Pope to a non-stop line of Jeffers."

Very touching is Miss Crary's "Postlude":

"I shall not know your nearness any more,
Ever—ever again.

I shall not wait, alone, and listen for
Your step, your eager step across the floor.
I shall not drink your words as we explore
Some long-forgotten page; nor shall I soar
With you aloft, seeking the eagle or
A comet's train. And yet . . . .

I shall not be alone, O Troubadour,
Ever—ever again,
My dear, my dear!"

We give the fifth stanza in "Caprice," which bespeaks an abiding faith:

"When the final curtain falters
On life's theatre, and we
Pass reluctant through the exit
To the street and destiny.
Who can doubt the all-wise Author
of the seasonal *tableau*,
'Spring and Summer, Autumn, Winter'
Has for us a greater Show?"

Still further giving us her firm belief we read "Definition":

"I stand upon the seashore. With the tide,
A ship is spreading eager-winging sails
To greet the morning breeze. I watch her ride
Voluptuous waves, until at last she pales
And hangs a moment poised triumphantly—
A tiny fleck, just where the lambent dawn
Flares forth to mingle with the sky and sea.
Then some one at my side breathes, 'She is gone!'

Gone where? Gone from our sight and that is all;
For she is just as brave in hull and mast
As when she left port at her captain's call.
And in that moment when one says, 'At last,
She's gone!' there are expectant voices crying,
'A ship! a ship ahoy! . . . And that is dying.' "

It is rare that a book of war poems interests the reader as *Cut is the Branch*, by Charles E. Butler (Yale University Press), with a foreword by Archibald MacLeish. His pictures are so clearly drawn and impressions so vivid. Mr. MacLeish tells us that this poet is a librarian by profession. He was brought up in Denver, Colorado, and received from its university his A.B. and B.S. and Library Science. He began writing in High School in Denver and has previously published in college magazines.

Mr. Butler was inducted into the army in 1942, and was a staff sergeant in the U.S. Army Air Forces in England since 1943.

"There is Something to be Said" follows:

"It is admirable to survive, It is good.
It means the strength and cunning to adjust,
Gritting the teeth and tightening the belt when there is no food,
Or eating for nourishment the stale and bitter crust.
It means running, or turning to strike the blow
At the opportune time, when the pursuer is weak:
It means silence, often, when the mind and the heart know
It is braver to speak.
It is admirable, I know: it is intelligent. This is true.
But there is something to be said for those who choose
Another victory than survival, who do what they must do,
Having lost what they could not live and lose."

And another, "Exposition":

"There have been many words since that time,
And many men have cried against the breaking light.
Only the words remain now, the few, the fragmentary;
The men are gone: coldly, casually, desperately,
They have stepped into the deep night.
Only the words remain: Poe, Shelley, Whitman;
The lame lover's and the other few:
They are music now, are dustless: they do not die,
But the men do.

The rest is only a signing of proclamations, of treaties;
A capturing and a releasing; a piling of stone on stone;
A quickening, a dulling. . . . But the men have gone down alone.
Only the words of the dead stand bright and glowing:
These are all, all.
The rest is only a loud wind blowing
Down a long hall."

Perhaps typical of many men's thoughts, Mr. Butler has given us "The Dark Adventure":

"The darkness wings from land to land,
And over every sea;
Against his brother each man's hand
Is raised in enmity.

Each hand bears death: even our hearts
Beat armed both day and night.
The long fool's dream of peace departs:
The last swift dove takes flight.

So man his dark adventure goes
Along the shadowed way:
And where the ending, no man knows,
Nor on what unknown day."

Sunday Serenade, Sammy Kaye's Book of Poetry (Republic Music Corp.), is printed in answer to the requests of thousands of our Sunday Serenade listeners on the radio. Here is a jolly book to own. Sidney K. Russell has an ardent lyric:

"Be to me all I dream you can be,
My son and sky and my unchanging star,
My promised land and my eternal sea;
Be to me all that you for ever are,
A light in darkness leading me along
A perilous way—a sure and steadfast light;
Oh, be my exultation and my song,
My secret ardour and my sudden light.

Be to me all I have not dared to dream,
The ultimate of all I strain to find,
My aspiration and my joy supreme;
Be to me soul and vision, heart and mind,
I ask but little else . . . whate'er befall
Oh, be my love and loveliness . . . my all!"

As in the manner of radio serenades they are concerned almost entirely with love: lovers' meeting, lovers' parting; lovers' joys and lovers' sorrows.

We come upon a poem of Lord Tennyson, "The Lotus Eaters," and "How Do I Love Thee?" by Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

Robert Wallace Smith writes us from California that *The Wild Boar* (Christopher Publishing House) is his third book, and that "there will be more to come. The two already published have done wonders for me." There is a vigorous optimism about these poems that attracts. Let us read the "Phantom Rider":

"He was a rider in the night,
A rider strange and free,
Courageously in phantom flight
From stranger Destiny.

He haunted Beauty old and new,
And Beauty yet unknown,
As one with many worlds to view,
Yet none to call his own.

He reined his steed toward the moon,
Along the starry ridge,
And on his mystic flight was soon
Across the Viewless Bridge."

Very characteristic is "Words":

"Along the pilgrim path upon the earth,
I pause halfway the old alloted span
To look between the May Day of my birth
And this uncertain mark; and as I scan
The strange and myriad times in turn my own,
Vaguely the future tells of seasons due:
The wandering star, that long has brightly shone,
Burns faintly and perhaps will fade from view;
But now the old horizon glows again
And I proceed upon the scene as one
Who, wild with dream and seeking stars amain,
Would ride the wind to hasten to the sun:
A poet's lust in mine, and may my theme
Be one of light, of music, and of dream."

Mr. Smith left his home in the backwoods section of the Southland, at an early age. He is self-educated, and learned unaided the art of versification, seeming to recognise verse as his natural medium for artistic expression, and utilising effectively his natural sense of rhyme and rhythm.

Edward Fenton was born in New York in 1917, and graduated from Amherst in 1937. In February 1942 he enlisted in the American Field Service as a volunteer to drive an ambulance with the British Army. After having been torpedoed he finally arrived in Egypt in time to join the Eighth Army in its triumphant African campaign. He is now living in New York.

Surely his war experience has given him a knowledge of how the soldier reacts, and in *Soldiers and Strangers* (Macmillan) he has given proof of it. "Catechism" is perhaps the most striking:

"What is your name?
A number.

Where is your home?
A place
I cannot now remember
with a calm face.

Where is your station?
Under
the bronze voice of command,
irrevocable as thunder
I moved as planned.

Where are you bound?
Wherever
the ship I board is sent
and lands me to deliver
your testament.

What is your faith?
One called it
a long word from a book,
though I, who must uphold it,
forget its look.
(But I see clear the faces
of those I leave behind,
and the outlines of lost places
cling to my mind.)

How long will you serve?
For ever
if need be.

While you live
what pledges do you render?
All that I have I give.
Yet all the world's abounding
words cannot decrease
my wonderment unending
as death, my sole release
buys your salvation: peace."

Mr. Fenton sends us a paragraph on poetry which is annexed: "As for why poetry should be written, I must confess I don't know. Simply because there are some things, I guess, which can't be said any other way. As for the part it plays in to-day's life —that's a long story. Some people, I think, only get it through the often debased medium of popular songs. But surely poetry still heightens life for all of us, and turns the trick of magicking things we might otherwise merely accept: just as a magic lantern slide makes us gasp with the beauty of something we'd always taken for granted."

ALICE HUNT BARTLETT.

Terry

SWEET scents of April-end, O sweet scents of May,
His head was raised to love you, one year away;
Fall, silken petals; lay your beauty low,
He now is lost from life as last year's April-blow.

Lois Deacon.

Poets and Pretenders

ONE would suppose it to be quite beyond argument that inspiration, that sudden winging flight of beauty into words, is at once the aim and the crown of all poetry, but there is apparently no limit to the divergence of human opinion nor any improbability of belief which fails to find adherents. The reason for this is no more nor less than that revolt against settled opinion and constituted authority which is so characteristic of the young or the immature (not necessarily the same thing), which impels those who suffer from it to seek change, not without hope also of betterment, but change anyhow. How far this restlessness of spirit is good we do not presume to decide. Some vigour of exploration, of enquiry would seem to be inevitable anyhow in human life but, like everything else, it needs to be intelligent, cool and, above all, without egotism to be useful. There is a responsibility inherent in all change which lays upon the innovator the duty to be single minded and free from any personal interest of gain or fame. It is no answer to this assertion to suggest that because the conservative in opinion are, upon the whole, timid that change must be good. Strength can be misdirected and effort mistaken and who does not know the egotist who, rather than acknowledge a mistake, will persist along a chosen course long after his absurdity has become obvious.

All of which brings us to a volume, miscalled *2nd Poems*, by W. S. Graham (Poetry, London, 5s.), and back to the belief, which we think to be general, that inspiration is the aim of poetry. For here is displayed, clearly enough, that headstrong misdirection of immaturity which, in spite of some healthy signs in the world of poetry of a belated realisation that the school of incoherency is wrong in its beliefs and practices, is again displayed in a second volume. Mr. Graham, according to the dust-cover, is more than anything interested in the technique of managing words, building his poems with them as a skilled craftsman might build a house with bricks while the meaning and beauty they have emerges primarily from their own organic structure. This is candid indeed. The synthetic character of these verses is as far from inspirational spontaneity as anything well could be and the skilled craftsman, concerned only with his bricks, but hoping for a happy accident of meaning and beauty as a result of his industry, is as bizarre a picture of a poet at work as words could paint.

> "Many without elegy interpret a famous heart
> Held with a searoped saviour to direct
> The land. This morning moves aside
> Sucking disaster and my bread
> On the hooped fields of Eden's mountain
> Over the crews of wrecked seagrain."

This is a sample taken at random and shows the craftsman at work with his usual disappointing result in either meaning or beauty. In that negation he must continue while he persists in this deliberate reversal of an order of nature whereby meaning must order speech, not speech, meaning, and where beauty in poetry is an accident not of the organic structure of words (whatever that may mean), but of that sudden unveiling of emotional insight which makes words, not bricks to be dropped hopefully and haphazard, but humble messengers with wings.

In contrast to the melancholy aberrations of this word-addict the verses of an R.A.F. Padre, Henry N. Forbes, *Wheat by the Winepress* (British Authors' Press), is a

relief. If this is but another example of cleverness with words and metre, it is yet of a more rational sort in the exercise of which anything, even inspiration, might happen, but never obfuscation. The Padre writes with vigour and a refreshing technical competence, but is content with a superficial approach to his war-themes. Even where he is moved by pity or indignation he captures no more than the commonplaces of sentiment or anger. Like many another before him he relies too much upon words, forgetting that we are all armoured against them unless they possess the power of piercing to the spirit by virtue of their genesis in that same mysterious region. The conscious arts of alliteration in a lament for a girl bomb-victim

"The nimble slim limbs frozen lie
Numbed by these dumb dank mounds of mould?"

the deliberate violence of

"We must observe economies in mud
For these dead dogs; so pile them in a heap
And in their self-dug trenches grave them deep
That no vile stench disturb our Herren blood."

both blunt the barb and cause the shaft to fall dead which could have stood quivering in our hearts had the padre's own emotion been less sublimated by his literary endeavour.

A privately published book of verse is not, as a rule, a proper subject for notice in this survey for reasons which we need not restate, but we make an exception in the case of *Spring Deferred*, by the late William Rose, Lieut., R.N., because our readers have had a vicarious contact with these poems already through the publication, in this Review of that most moving requiem "Instead of Tears," by Dr. Marie Stopes, penned, in the freshness of her sorrow, for her friend, Bill Rose.

The sincerity of this tribute and of others which have been made by those who knew him, suggest an unusual quality in the author of this volume; and there are, no doubt, indications in it, evidences of a promise never, alas, to be fulfilled, which are amply sufficient to explain and justify the high regard in which he was held during his short life. The desire of friends to commemorate a charming and significant personality in such a way as this is entirely laudable, and in this case justified. But William Rose had not reached his full stature when he died in H.M.S. *Cossack*, and his work, here presented, is remarkable not so much for its depth, or its emotional strength, as for its deftness in expression. That quality, with its suble evidence of latent power, is apparent in a measure which is never observable in any but work of true promise, being less a skill which may be acquired by taking pains than a natural aptitude reserved for the poet born.

But to return to our leitmotif, inspiration. It is obvious that that sudden upsurge of emotional percipience may be more readily controlled, and more fully utilised, when all the craft of versification and virtuosity of word are at its service. It does not do to fumble at such times. Indeed the inspiration will use the conscious skill of the poet, unconsciously, but with entire fidelity to his individual virtues and weaknesses. It may be said even that the quality of inspiration varies with the visitee, as the wind is tempered to the lamb, and that is why one sometimes may deduce from the technical

expertise the quality and even the frequency with which it will be illumined by those irruptions from the soul which we call inspiration. The great poets have all been masters of their craft, and some to such degree that it might seem that they have been continuously inspired. It is undoubtedly true that the poet may induce in himself a superior receptivity, or is it sensitivity, to inspiration, by a habit of mental introversion, as though that long lazy almost uncontrolled pondering in some way shreds the veil which hides the unconscious from us. Be that as it may we are sure that the modern habit of extroversion, by which the poet's conscious mind is turned inside out for our inspection, without reserve, will teach us nothing, for already we have it all inside our own minds; and what is the use of writing unless one says something new which yet carries instant conviction in an echo from our souls.

One of the hardest forms with which to capture this elusive spring of revelation is the sonnet, no doubt because we do not think in terms of such verbal discipline and must perforce stumble over its exigences when impelled so irresistibly from behind. Is that why there are so few great sonnets although many great poems? It seems as if the virtuosity business can be overdone, and it was therefore with some additional interest that we explored *Poems and Contradictions*, by Rex Warner (John Lane, 6s.). This is partly a book of sonnets, which give evidence, alas, of imperfect technical competence in the too frequent absence of that over-all rhythm which makes for easy reading. The Shakespearean form is less difficult in that respect than the Petrarchan, but in both the octave (if the Shakespearean has one) should comprise two easily dovetailing quatrain-sentences, and it is an excellent plan to continue with another, leaving the final couplet (of Shakespeare's mode) to its solitary *coup-de-grâce*. If it is Petrarch's model which engages you then the sestet rhyme scheme which you choose must dictate your sentential balance, but in both cases it should not be forgotten that the Sonnet must be measured in its utterance and must therefore respect the respiratory habit of man and not make him breathless.

Mr. Warner forgets this, however, and many of his sonnets limp in consequence; nor is it apparent that he is an introvert in his susceptibility to inspiration. These sonnets are of a definitely literary sort and, Mr. Warner being a literary man, that is not perhaps surprising. But poetry is not a branch of literature and will not surrender to literary wiles.

The other poems, as distinct from the sonnets, are vigorously alive and with a sardonic flavour to them which again has a literary smell. Yet in their unemotional briskness they are good, adequate reading, taking from verse-form that added authority which is inherent in poetic rhythms. It is difficult to select a typical passage for quotation, the fare is very varied, but the following is a modest sample for style and treatment—the first verse of a poem called "Light and Air":

> "Our private vision is death, and the seers are yellow
> who saw something remarkable in the dark,
> who left the gas turned on but never lit it,
> and innocently withdrew before the explosion,
> only too glad to forgive everyone."

We should not wish to be pedantic on this or on any matter, but it seems to be the fact that in the case of poetry, as in many other things, its original purpose and reason

have been forgotten. We say nothing now of blatant disdains for rhythm, rhyme and even sense, but refer to the contented attitude of the poets (or versifiers) of to-day with the prevalent habit of addressing the brain of their reader rather than his heart. This is, of course, the fundamental heresy—the black mass, so to speak—and whether it is a logical consequence of our modern brain worship (in which expediency is preferred to principle) we do not pretend to know. But poetry is, of course, not a communication upon a purely mental plane; indeed, it is only so in its mechanics; its impact should be sensuous and its goal the spirit. But who stays to consider these old truths to-day? Certainly not Mr. Donald Thompson in *Spring Sacrifice* (John Lane, 5s.), although his work is said by the dust-cover to be alive with those hall-marks of the true poet, tenderness and sympathy. This assertion is, of course, a half-truth only, not that we qualify or deny Mr. Thompson's possession of these genial attributes, but only that they could be in themselves a guarantee of poetic quality. There is too much word-play in some of his pieces for comfort, let alone for poetry.

"First, primrose promise of the mountain side,
Streams' tenor tremor and the feathered flash
And lizards lazy . . ."

This is alliteration's artless aid with a vengeance, and seems to us to place such things definitely in the category of mental contrivance as distinct from the spontaneous eloquence of true poetry.

Coming much nearer to that introverted disdain of the material, in which the poet says so much more than he knows, or has thought, is a little book from Palestine, *Through the Troubled Sphere*, by Stephen Jolly, published in Haifa with a foreword by Arnold Zweig. The distinguished author of this preface is concerned to remark the high level which English poetry has maintained during the last 100 years, and which has made it as nationally pre-eminent as French painting, German music, Russian novelism and Scandinavian drama. This is as it should be with the descendants of Shakespeare and Milton, and Mr. Jolly seems to us to have been conscious of the noble standard which has been set for him, and to have written with that simplicity which humbly adds its mite with no more ambition than to help sustain it. He gives us many sonnets, but in his other poems he is more at home for his simple faith is more content in simpler forms and is well expressed in:

"To you, in truth, within the fact of love, I say:
Achieve!
Here, endowed and endowing,
Here, alive to a touch
Is part of eternity's willingness."

The achievement which Mr. Jolly has in mind is, no doubt, of that high order of things known as creation. It is common to hear the phrase, creative work, applied to art, but it is not always realised that the act of creation is that of making something out of nothing, the achievement of which confers the quality of immortality upon the thing produced. A picture may be but paint and canvas, plus human craftsmanship, which have been assembled without that ghostly ingredient from the soul which, being part of eternity itself, makes the whole a creation and immortal. The same is true of poetry, in which nothing is created unless inspiration is present; and perhaps we

have, by this reflection, found the touchstone by which infallibly we may distinguish poetry from verse. True creation has the power of exciting an emotional response, as distinct from an intellectual satisfaction, and it is superlatively easy to apply this simple test. If one does so to two poems, by Alan C. Tarbat, called *The New Gate* and *The Ballad of Buchenwald* (Warren and Son, 6d. each), the former commemorating the battle of Britain, one is left in no doubt as to which category they belong, and it will be many years, we think, before either of these themes finds an immortal chronicler. They are both too recent in time for that recollection in tranquillity which is necessary, and neither has yet received that historical evaluation by means of which the mind of posterity will be freed from prejudice and the unfolded imaginations of men led to the truth.

Much the same can be said of *These are your Dead*, by Bayly Akroyd (King and Staples, 6d.), described as variations on a theme for spoken voice. Some eleven separate poems upon an identical subject, that of our fighting men, are presented, and all are of competent craftsmanship in blank verse, but there the matter ends.

Narrative poems are difficult to thread upon an argument such as we have made in this article since the narrator is, save in some well-known classical examples, more concerned with his theme than with its poetic implications. This indeed is where such things usually fail because however well told the story only a poetic interpretation of it gives proper warranty for the poetic form. Thus in *Tallahassie*, by Andrew Merkel (Imperial Publishing Co., Halifax, $2.00), we are told a vigorous story of the sea in competent rhyming stanzas, which relies for its appeal on something less than poetry, but makes good amends by proving almost but not quite as easy to read as prose. The tang of the sea is, as might be expected, not very apparent in this work; poetry alone could have evoked it, but the whole is a very good example of the versifier's craft not often marred by awkward lines.

A very different book is *The Midnight Court*, by Frank O'Connor (Maurice Fredberg, 6s.). This is full of further translations from the Irish of Bryan Merriman, and while these suffer, as all translations do and must, there is here and there a glimpse of the original beauty to make the book worth perusal. Inspiration lives in syllabic music and dwells in the order and selection of words. In making a translation it is not possible in most cases to avoid, with new language, the relegation of the original inspiration to the darkness from whence it came. There have been examples where this has not happened and one which leaps to the mind is, of course, Fitzgerald's translation of *Omar Khayyam*; but Fitzgerald was himself inspired by his original and was given his new words in their fresh order by that same emotional percipience which the original had engendered in him. In the long poem which gives its name to and occupies the major portion of *The Midnight Court* the inspired quality, if there was any in the original, is lacking, and we are left with a sex content which was doubtless much more suited to the 18th century and to the wilder parts of Ireland than to these latitudes and this century. There is, however, more merit in some of the shorter pieces:

"I cannot tear myself in two
My love, your love, within my mind
Pants like a bird within its cage—
My lover, must you be unkind?

If 'tis not wasted time to plead
Sweet son of Shuretan, let me be;
The women of the world are yours,
I am my husband's; let me be."

This quotation is from a poem entitled "To Tomaus Costello at the Wars" and must serve, short as it is, to illustrate the flavour of the whole. The short pieces are, we think, definitely the best and give, if not the full value of the original text, yet enough of its Irish character for a strong claim to success.

Religious poetry comes into the sphere of inspired utterance by a privileged door, as it were, and *Selected Poems*, by George Every, J. D. C. Pellow and S. L. Bethell (King and Staples, 6s.), is no exception. Indeed these are, most of them, unusual poems and betray a fresh vigour which is in happy contrast to the submissive note of so much devotional verse. Some of it gives the same astringent impression as the Bible in the vernacular or that extraordinary play of Miss Dorothy Sayers, *The Man Born to be King*. We cannot make a clear choice between the beauty of the language of James I and the claims of contemporary English, and perhaps this is a theological question with practical implications which is better left to prelates. It can be noted, however, that when we are regaled in the vernacular with sacred themes there is often an undue bias towards a debunking ordinariness, as in the opening lines of the following:

"They had no room for Him,
No handkerchief to fold under His head,
No old coat to throw over the bed.
The candle flickered and grew dim.
Her shadow leapt and dwindled over Him;
And in her shadow's dance
The secret hosts advance.
Angels are there, philosophers and kings,
Herdsmen, artificers of humble things,
Hidden behind His mother, on the floor
Of mud and clay they drop down to adore."

Thus George Every in "Nativity". Mr. Pellow's work is of a different sort, less devotional, perhaps more philosophical, in its approach. His contribution opens with a striking, rather staccato, poem, called "Bread," which begins:

"Earth bore me, Air bathed me,
Water fed me, Fire stirred me . . .

continues:

All four elements Meet in me
Of the round world For man's feeding . . .

and concludes:

I am lifted up, The fair white body
And I draw men unto me, Of God's Son."

The last contributor, Mr. S. L. Bethell, is also individual in his expression of and response to his religious convictions and there is distinction also in his approach to them. In "Retribution," a short poem, he makes a common enough point, perhaps, but he makes it with ease and economy. We quote it all:

"Slag-heaps thrust against the tide,
Monuments of human pride,
Dwarf the cliffs that Nature made,
And boast her mighty conqueror, Trade.

Furnace fires that pale the stars
Feed our all-consuming wars
With metal in a crimson flood
To increase the spate of human blood.

Thus Nature, conquered for our gain,
Mocks the expense of arm and brain,
And through our own defective will
Asserts her rights upon us still."

The applicability of the last verse to our well-grounded fears in regard to the atom-bomb needs no emphasis.

The reprinting of Sir John Davies' poem "Orchestra" is an event for which we may be grateful both to its editor, Dr. E. M. W. Tillyard, and to the publishers, Chatto and Windus (4s.). This is a little known piece of Elizabethan verse, written about the year 1594, and in fifteen days, if the dedicatory sonnet (mixed Shakespeare and Petrarch) is to be believed. The subject is dancing and the prosody is both lively and urbane as one would expect from a young man of good family, classical education and some wit. The poem, slightly abridged in length, was included in Chambers's *Oxford Book of Sixteenth Century Verse*, but we are told that the present version is intended for the general reader and has been modernised in spelling and punctuation. This was perhaps a labour of love but surely, since Elizabethan English is so dear to our hearts, one of supererogation also.

Disillusion is perhaps a bad mood or state of mind for the invocation of inspiration and we have often noted how the minor key, or the minatory, have some power to persuade the poet of their all-sufficiency. *Four and Twenty Poems of Today and Yesterday* by Dennis Birch (Fortune Press, 5s.) gives this impression although perhaps not all of these poems fall within one or other of these states of mind. But sufficient of them do to make the book unexciting reading in spite of the author's facility in finding the good and telling line which redeems his work from mediocrity. Most of it is in free verse unrhymed, muchly descriptive, which results as usual in an appearance of chopped prose and we wish we could understand why so much effort is so enthusiastically expended on this form of writing.

We liked best the poem called "Cry for the Cotswolds" towards the end of the book. We quote two verses only:

"How long shall Painswick steeple rise
Above the yew trees to the Cotswold skies;
And I not there.
The lamps of Camden Town are dim,
Euston at dawn is grey and grim,
And Bloomsbury precise and prim."

* * * * *

"Let me tramp once more
Along the track the Romans made,
Where the wind blows clean—
By those ageless tumbled walls
By the ridge, where the curlew calls
To the edge, where the whole world falls";

The theme is, of course, hackneyed enough but its treatment conveys a real sense of nostalgic longing.

The Grass Grows Through, a poem sequence by C. P. Billot (Fortune Press, 5s.) opens unattractively enough with the poet's mind working to impress and as is to be expected, failing.

"Time has become water:
On a grand scale
The celebrated drip-torture of the Inquisition:
Each hour, each day
Dripping
Coldly, with oblivious precision,
Dropping on my naked brain until
Suddenly hammer will crush skull
And I am mad."

It is true that later on Mr. Billot achieves here and there a closer approach to poetry although we would not credit him with inspired utterance anywhere in this volume. Cleverness is there in plenty but, as we have so often observed, the appeal to the intellect is an insufficient reason for the poetic form. However, it may be that like giants rejoicing in their strength there are poets whose virtuosity with words and phrases is such that they cannot harness and subdue their athletic verbal facility to the dominance of that introverted dream-state to which, alone, inspiration comes. One last quotation, a stanza which went as far as anything in the book to arouse in us a responsive feeling

"His is the voice of powdered mist in ferns,
A sigh from the enormous frost of stars,
And silent trees, secret as gnarled earth,
Holding stiff veins and arteries like broken fans
Sketched in brown ink against a yellow sky."

Here is a sudden illumination of objective descriptive power which prompts us to suggest that Mr. Billot is neglecting too often his greater talent.

Anonymity in the next volume hides no genius. Called *The Anonymous Elegies* by the author of 35 *Anonymous Odes* (Fortune Press, 5s.) it opens unelegiacally enough with the following

"Yeats in his horny grave lies down:
In my grave, too, will I lie.
Shakespeare now is history,
O may I likewise be."

It is perhaps unnecessary to comment that the author will not be, since it appears to us that the book gets no better as it progresses, as indeed is to be expected of the work of any one who could commence so feebly.

Mr. John Anderson, the author of *Brim of Day* (Fortune Press, 6s.) does very little better. He begins with a number of sonnets, some 43 of them, including 25 love sonnets. These are partly in the Petrarchan and partly in Shakespearean form and in our view they all lack that fire and completeness which the sonnet demands. There is too often to be noted that slurring of difficulty, that contentment with a poor rhyme, and that deficient rhythm which are quite inadmissible in a sonnet. Of all the forms of poetry this is the one which must have the impromptu flavour of passion at white heat. Mr. Anderson's sonnets have it not. The lyrics which end the book appeal to us no more than the sonnets and we forbear to quote.

Poems from Ireland which are described as witty and irrepressible always arouse in us a happy feeling of anticipation. *Babel Babble*, by Lynn Doyle (Talbot Press, 2s. 6d.), scarcely satisfied that feeling. Irrepressible it certainly is with its quick easy rhymed couplets and a certain liveliness of imagination on its own superficial plane; but witty, no. Wit is a more scintillating thing than the mild humour of this longish fable with its Babylonian characters. There is not enough originality nor agility of thought in this work to carry one through to its conclusion without fatigue, however one may admire its dexterity. Humorous verse is, of course, as apt a matter for inspiration, or nearly so, as other types of verse, and the masters of it have not seldom achieved the swift flight into the upper air. But Mr. Doyle remains on the earth while his tower of Babel pierces to the sky and he has not made as much fun of it as we have a right to expect from an Irishman.

> "That rounding smoke drives out the souls of men,
> creating nullity where once the mind had engined
> and glad tongue wagged; on the cool light of evening
> flinging the severed limb and rain of brain."

The above is taken from *The Cloth of Flesh* by Sean Jennett (Faber and Faber, 6s.). The dust-cover asserts that these poems are harder and sharper and show a firmer mastery of the medium than those in Mr. Jennett's first book. We regret this since in our view poetry should be neither hard nor sharp and a firm mastery of the medium points so inevitably to mere technical accomplishment. To talk of inspiration in this atmosphere is clearly a waste of time but the hardness and sharpness are certainly there in the subtle mental violence which is so constantly displayed.

> "I sought in anger for a peaceful heart:
> the heart of Christ I doubled in my fist—
> it could not beat between my caging fingers
> and it died there because I held it fast."

But this is not poetry, whatever the belief of its author. There is neither truth in it nor beauty but only the thought of impressing the reader with the emancipation of the writer's mind. To write poetry does indeed require emancipation but not "of" the mind but "from" the mind, whose unsure but truculent interference is the enemy of that clear emotional insight which must be cozened from the depth of our natures before poetry can find expression. *The Cloth of Flesh* is the production of a conscious mind and bears all the stigmata of its origin.

Very different, as its title implies, is *The Gentle Heart* published in Naples, by Capt.

J. K. G. Hoffmann and embellished with a merited word of recommendation in a preface by Lady Margaret Sackville. The distinguished prefator lays some stress upon the Author's freedom from literary influences and this prompted us to enquire whether poets should read poetry or whether they should preserve that ignorance of the matter with which a jury comes to the trial. It would seem that the true poet needs no tutelage from the past, and that his inevitable hunger to read other men's poetry might be an indulgence of doubtful value which should be restrained if his individual note is to be clearly heard in the symphony of song. Since there is nothing new under the sun saving the infinite variability of the human species it is perhaps better to preserve that one thing from external pressures, but it may still be true that individuality can never be suppressed entirely and it is certainly so if it be strong.

Capt. Hoffmann, at all events, is unconcerned and untrammelled in his singing. He is of that order of craftsmen which has learned to hide its technique in a spontaneity and simple freshness which give to his work a quality which is as unselfconscious as breathing. And yet perhaps this is to give an impression of conscious artistry where there is no such thing, for these poems have, all of them, an air of impromptu evocation, not indeed of immortal utterance, but certainly of sincere and deep feeling. Where the poet forgets himself in his mundane rôle and loses his ego in reverie then we have something which can never bore but will charm us to that degree which is the true measure of his value. To quote from this book is not easy but since a choice has to be made we select the following poem in which the curious economy of language makes some little difficulty, here and there, but hides none of the authentic beauty of its music.

"O shape of flower I touch
By what Hand made,
And where the palette gave
Such pastel shade?

You glow in loveliness
From stalk to height,
And purely gaze on me
Candid as light.

What secret seen yet hid
In you!—what Mind
Has left His mystery
In you enshrined?

I look on you, your cheek
Of petals feel,
But innocently naught
Will you reveal.

I turn from you to look
Upon Love's face,
And find there gentleness
And holy grace.

O flower, how like my Fair
So sweet, so true,
For Love and Beauty burn
In her and you.

But what the Mind, I own,
Defeats me still,
And what the skilful Hand
Transforms such will

I cannot dare to know
Nor dimly guess:
I stand before your Truth
And Loveliness.

Secure and glad, unfeared
Of any fate,
And heart and hand of me
I dedicate."

The urge to write verse in a broad Scots dialect persists, no doubt, from that feeling of nationalism which we are so busy fostering, in spite of a growing realisation of its dangers. The revival of the Irish and Welsh languages and the efforts, in Scotland, to preserve the Gaelic, are plain evidence of the one-track thinking which this "patriotism" imposes on otherwise intelligent persons. Our Scottish and Welsh bards do not, however, commit themselves to so small a public as their native tongues would provide preferring the larger appeal of a language which commands a so much greater hope of sales. But the Scot, at least, has that patois at his disposal which Burns made famous, and threatens to make permanent, in which he may indulge both his pride of birth and his hope of profit. But what other use has this rather studied dialect? The educated Scot no longer uses it and only finds in it the amusement of baffling the Sassenach.

Perhaps, however, we are being captious and *Still More Dream Roads* was written by Mr. D. C. Cuthbertson (Aeneas Mackay, 3s. 6d.) with just that object. If so we "maun just bide and thole it," although it would seem that the real effort has not been to reduce the dialectical whimsicality to comprehensibility but to intensify it beyond anything that Burns ever did; for he was intent always to promote our understanding. For the rest the author has a musical pen and a zest in nature; and in those pieces in which he uses undiluted English and thus exposes himself to our critical arrows he displays a considerable technical ability, a tenderness for natural beauty, but very little more, when all is said, than a gift for light verse.

Peter Noble whose work has on occasion appeared in this REVIEW and in *Poetry of Today* has collected twenty poems under the title of "The City in the Sun" (Pendulum, 1s.). These poems are very different in tone but very alike in their absence of inspirational fire and their resultant cerebral quality. The technical achievement is good and the work suggests that the author believes it to be good enough to "get away with it" with no other help than his intellect can provide. We should like to disabuse him of any such belief if he holds it.

To conclude our series, we are very happy to notice a volume of poems by *Yanks in Britain* collected by the American Red Cross, published by the *Daily Mail* but selected by the New Verse Editor of this journal who wrote a preface for the book. The poems, as might be imagined, are, from the strictly poetical point of view, uneven, and the selection indeed was not made from that point of view alone. The impressive part of so much of this work was its lack of sophistication in the sense of literary expertise, and the extreme naturalness of expression by many contributors who, we believe, will probably never write verse again. This made the task of selection most interesting, and indeed exciting, because it seemed to point to some mysterious need in humanity to express itself rhythmically when confronted with an upheaval in its normal life such as theirs, with its novelty and danger and the intensification of living which goes with these things. It is certain that modern forms (so called) were conspicuous by their absence and even the least of these poems in some measure sang.

We believe this little volume will create an impression upon even those whose taste in poetry is unexceptionable, and we are delighted and honoured to have had some part in its production.

The Feminine Touch

IT is good to see the essays of Miss Dallas Kenmare on poetry and poets, that have appeared in THE POETRY REVIEW and elsewhere, collected into book form under the title of *The Long Pursuit* (Burrows, 4s. 6d.). She is challenging as well as persuasive, and she writes from knowledge and deep insight. Rilke, Hardy, Lady Margaret Sackville, Professor G. Wilson Knight, and D. H. Lawrence are mainly studied for their prophetic vision, the raw material of the poet's labours.

Tribute to the Angels, by H. D. (O.U.P., 3s. 6d.), a mystical poem, is written in the blunt living idiom of to-day and yet in tune with the biblical rhythms of a long yesterday. Its elusive and suggestive qualities form over and under currents to the general movement to create a serene, questing, satisfying whole, ending thus:

"And the point in the spectrum
Where all lights become one,
is white, and white is not no-colour
as we were told as children,
but all-colour;
where the flames mingle
and the wings meet, when we gain
the arc of perfection,
we are satisfied, we are happy,
we begin again;
This is the flowering of the rod,
this is the flowering of the burnt-out wood,
where, Zadkiel, we pause to give
thanks that we rise again from death and live."

The sensitive spirit of the poet, present in varying degrees within many of us, has been more harshly bruised by the cruelties of war than some of the bodies physically damaged. This is noticeable in the sensitive little poems of Mary Mair, *The Small Voice* (The Fortune Press, 3s. 6d.). The firm but delicate climax to her poems is often focussed upon destruction, decay and death, though her faith in the ultimate prevalence of good safeguards her thoughts from morbidity or gloom. "Spring and War" and "May Prayer" are proof of this:

"From morning to evening
A brown thrush is singing
And loud rooks are telling
Of building well done.

From morning to evening
A brown box is telling
Of death and destruction
By bomb, tank and gun.

* * *

May I, when new May buds unfold,
Forget the grief of growing old,
And look with eyes as young as spring
For the first time on everything."

The individuality of counties, and particularly of Sussex, has been captured by many writers of verse. In *Sussex Gleanings*, by Elizabeth Barrett (Baxter, Lewes, 1s. 6d.), there are some happily portrayed little sketches of landscape and character, illustrated by photographs. Miss Barrett, too, can see beyond the present ills to a future of recreation on the Downs:

"How deep into my heart it cuts
To see these paths but earthy ruts.
My soul is filled with vain regrets,
And yet I know that once before,
When right at last had conquered might,
How swiftly nature smoothed from sight
The many hideous wounds of war.
She will not fail again to heal,
The gorse will bloom and in between
Paths will be flowery and green,
And peace into our hearts will steal."

Cotswolds Calling, by A. Dorothy Holmes (Bennett, Bristol), is also a collection of local pictures, as its name suggests, illustrated by the author herself, and has made its appeal to lovers of the Cotswold country. Mrs. Holmes is not quite so well in command of her pen when she attempts the more general, deeper themes of her later book *Storm Wrack*, the proceeds of which she has generously dedicated to the blind. Perhaps haste to complete this good endeavour or the more exacting forms used have caused the carelessnesses of rhyme and pattern. There is a nice little epigram, however, termed "Our Critics":

" 'The Poet is a curious beast,'
At least that's what I'm told,
'Who wraps up funny little thoughts
He leaves *you* to unfold.'

But when you've untied all the knots
And got the parcel wide,
You often wonder what on earth
He *thinks* he put inside."

Devon Rose, by Estelle Ryott (*Torquay Times*), a little book of homely, simple poems, has also a few local touches, though her themes range through many aspects of nature and include some religious verse. There are several other small volumes almost entirely devoted to this engrossing theme. Each author seeks in her own way to bring messages of hope and comfort to others rather than to accomplish the writing of verse to be judged by the standards of poetry. Ruth Abraham, in *Easter and Christmas Poems* (2s.) uses parable and paraphrase a good deal to convey her message. A short sonnet sequence commemorating the outstanding Christian events, and several hymns are the mediums chosen by Alice P. Harbord in *The Bravest of Brave* (Author, Reigate, 1s.). Elsie M. Bannister gives us a new "Dahna" book of selected poems called *O, Sweet Oasis* (Johnson, Southport, 2s. 6d.). They are on many topics, but her messages of cheer and consolation predominate and are imbued

with an urgent religious apprehension. Winifred A. Pearce, in her *Earthen Vessels*, brings some enriching imagery to her mission of worship and song:

"Imagination bids me bend her bow
And with the arrows of desire
Fasten the threads of thought below
That fan and feed my individual fire. . . .

The threads of thought from heaven come dropping down,
Cast by the Fishers in their boats above
To catch our souls that in the deeps would drown
Had not God tangled them in nets of Love!"

The Gap of Time, by Dorothea Dixon (Three Candles, Dublin), is a little book of slight poems with a certain charm of thought that prevails over some awkwardness of syntax.

Janet Jeffrey can give an individual turn of thought and term to her *Poems* (Morrison and Gibb). They are sometimes grave and at times gay, like "The Ice Cream Man," and a few are in Scots, but all have something satisfying and beautiful in them. Her delight in bird life, too, makes an irresistible appeal. I quote "The Wren":

"Beneath the hawthorn rigging and sail I lie,
With eyes caught up in the clouds that go
Floating along the azure sky.
When lo!
Anchors my dream-ship noiselessly,
While Time drifts tideless, idly, by
And thrills the mainmast wrinkled, brown,
And thrills my heart, for like a crown,
Aloft
Upon the leafy crest, a-swaying soft,
Half clinging feet, half beating wings,
Hovers a tiny wren, small, brown and dear,
Who suddenly her lyric rapture sings
Oh, full of merriment, oh, golden clear!"

Another very individual writer, Chloris Heaton Ross, has just published a new book through The Favil Press: *A Flat in Bloomsbury* (3s. 6d.). She gives grace and exaltation to the most homely things and, conversely, brings to earth and quick comprehension the exalted things of the spirit with home-spun imagery. I think "Spring in Russell Square," where a flying bomb fell last year, is of special delight to readers of THE POETRY REVIEW, because No. 36 was the home of The Poetry Society for several years, and its green shade made a visual background to the sound of much good poetry read there:

"The stricken tree puts out small flags of green,
Brave bunting strung to fête the Spring again;
Torn bush and broken bench are sweet with rain,
New lit with colours pastoral and clean.

Roll Winter's stone away! Recharged the air
Is urgent like a rush of joyous feet,
As if God's trumpets blazed above the street
A sign. The grey old houses seem aware,

And shabby folk make pause before they pass
To see the all-forgiving green unfold,
The Word fulfilled: O mortal man, behold
The resurrection in each blade of grass!"

E. D. BANGAY.

"SPAIN EVERLASTING" (Hollis & Carter, 18s.) combines the profound archæological knowledge and the illuminating poetic insight associated with all the literary output of S. F. A. Coles, particularly exemplified in "Cities of Troy" which we noticed recently. Mr. Coles in his new volume confines himself to eloquent, colourful prose appropriate to his purpose of providing a book of enduring value based on discoveries and encounters during a two-year pilgrimage of the Peninsula, illustrated by a profusion of admirable photographs. Happily, too, this very individual volume dealing with historical Spain is absolutely non-political. Even the Prime Minister, interviewed in the Cortes, is merely referred to as the "Premier of the hour." In a country where "even the beggars talk like poets" Mr. Coles finds many opportunities of becoming lyrical. Here is a typical passage:

"On the Paseo la Herradura sunset was flooding Santiago de Compostela in a rainbow haze—that very light which never was on sea or land. On the crest of the mountains a needle-cross marked the granite quarry from which had come the stone used in the building of the Cathedral. Through a curtain of flowering trees the symmetrical marvel of El Obradoiro faded in a rose mist.

"The air became charged with a compelling spiritual vibrance; never did I remember anywhere, except at Nazareth, at Bethlehem, and near Bethany, being conscious of such an atmosphere of authentic sanctity; not in St. Stephen's in Budapesth, not even at Assisi, no, not even in Rome itself. If the relics of James, to whom 'every good gift and every perfect gift cometh down from the Father of Lights,' had indeed been discovered in this hallowed ground by eighth-century Iberian shepherds in a rude stone sarcophagus marked with the letters 'Iago' (James) it was no cause for astonishment; for the countryside all around Santiago de Compostela has an intrinsically holy aura."

The writer's history is intimate and curious, giving rise to such interesting incidental details as the following:—"The Spanish Ambassador to the Court of James I was a Conde de Gondomar, a direct ancestor of our host, who had pleased his Ruler, Philip the Second, by bringing Sir Walter Raleigh to the block. Some years after the death of Shakespeare the Ambassador had returned to Spain, bringing with him a First Folio copy of the 1623 edition of the Plays. This a careless Valladolid librarian, deeming the heavy book in a foreign jargon of no value, had cast into the fire and destroyed when rearranging the former Ambassador's books last century." Spain remains exclusive, proud, unchanging and unchangeable—everlasting.

The Critic

GLIBLY with easy word and phrase
Another's utterance he condemned,
As if, enlightened he could blaze
A solar pathway, star-begemmed,
And like a meteor, leave behind
One of such ill-conditioned mind.

With choice expression and disdain
That in each accent sharply stung,
He pricked his fellow man with pain,
The barb of an unbridled tongue.
The words thus flung to wound, displayed
A mind untutored and unstayed.

The soul he scorned had half his gifts
Perhaps; and yet a nobler part
Fulfilled, since love alone uplifts
The understanding and the heart—
That other who but peace desired
More humble was and more inspired.

John F. Waddington.

The Way to the Kingdom

WE that have died are happier than most,
For unto us is a bright new birthday given;
Those limpet-souls who cling to life, have lost
Their way, and fumble vainly for the latch of heaven.

What is the magic in the cuckoo-strain
But silence—shattered by that rare remark?
How should we praise the rainbow but for rain?
How love the sunlight, knowing not the dark?

Who, unacquainted with the ways of grief
Can be entrusted with a faltering soul?
How may we hope to offer some relief
To stricken comrades, paying not the toll?

Wherein is strength for man in living bread
But that the grain falls to the ground and dies?
Oh, glorious God, so is Thy Spirit shed
In the dying of Thy First-born and Thy Prize.

We come to life as the Lord of all life came;
Through the poverty of grief and sting of shame.

Rachel E. Boulton.

WEAK RHYMES AND CRITICISM

SIR,—In your Issue No. 2 (1945), Sir Patrick R. Laird protests against what he calls the "fallacy" that "blue" and "dew" are not in rhyme on the ground that the sound is double O in each case. As far as ordinary speech is concerned, perhaps there is little difference, but the poet is exercised in his mind with more subtle distinctions. There is something the matter with the ear of any poet who cannot distinguish between the vowel sounds of "blue" and "dew." They most definitely are not both "double O."

There are, indeed, finer distinctions. The words "vain," "vane," and "vein," for example, are not pronounced alike. Nor are the words "reign," "rein," and "rain," or the words "wait" and "weight." This does not mean that the poet must be a professor of phonetics—it merely assumes that a poet is interested in the sounds of words, simply because he is a poet.

Although, however, I agree with your reviewer on the question of "blue" and "dew" being bad rhymes, I consider this a wrong approach to the criticism of poetry. If the rhyme in a poem is weak, the poet should be given credit for having noticed this, and deliberately left it. The question a critic should ask himself is, "does the poetic value of this poem 'carry' the rhyme?" If it does *not*, then the bad rhyme can be criticised from this point of view:—i.e. that it is not worth putting such a bad rhyme in a poem that would lose nothing by amendation to make it a good rhyme. If the poetic value *does* carry the rhyme, then the fact that the rhyme is weak is of no importance. Take the example of Shelley, from *Adonais*:

"He lives, he wakes—'tis Death is dead, not he;
Mourn not for Adonais.—Thou young Dawn,
Turn all thy dew to splendour, for from thee
The spirit thou lamentest is not gone;
Ye caverns and ye forests, cease to moan!
Cease, ye faint flowers and fountains, and thou Air,
Which like a mourning veil thy scarf hadst thrown
O'er the abandoned Earth, now leave it bare
Even to the joyous stars, which smile on its despair!"

This being a Spenserian Stanza, the words "Dawn," "gone," "moan," and "thrown" should all rhyme. But only two of these words even approach a rhyme.—Yet the stanza is high poetry—and for this reason can carry these weak rhymes, which therefore become of no importance in critical consideration of the work.

It is natural that critics should want poetry to follow hard and fast rules, for they are lazy, like most of us, and it is easier to apply a cast-iron criterion than to attempt to assess anything so nebulous as poetic value—the understanding of which requires so much more than mere knowledge of the dynamics of verse-writing.

Menston-in-Wharfedale, July 10th. JOHN NORMANTON.

THE LAY READER

I shall attempt to isolate the phrase "lay reader" used relatively recently by several of your correspondents. The dictionary gives the following definitions of the adjective "lay": "As or pertaining to the laity as distinct from the clergy"; "not educated or cultivated; ignorant (Obs)"; "unprofessional."

The term "reader" admits a literacy; therefore, we may presume that there are "readers of history," "readers of science," "readers of literature," etc. "Readers of literature" may be broken down into several subdivisions one of which would undoubtedly be "readers of poetry." This group apparently has been broken into "lay readers of poetry" and "non lay readers of poetry."

Before consideration of the "lay readers of poetry," we must establish what we mean when we say "readers of poetry." To do this we must seek for at least one common denominator that has placed these readers in this particular category. They are not "readers of trivia or doggerel," "readers of nonsense" or "readers of philosophical treatises." What then is this common characteristic? Obviously it lies in a more or less common taste—the first cause, as it were, unified through a common appreciation of that which has already been adjudged by the only worthy critic—time, as great poetry: Homer, Dante, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Keats, Shelley, Wordsworth, Burns, *et al.*

What is it then that "readers of poetry" do not have in common to bring about this schism that is implied in "lay readers of poetry" and "non lay readers of poetry"? In other words, after due consideration of the common characteristic what have we left unconsidered? Only "poetry" that has not as yet been adjudged poetry by the common standards of time and the welding of tastes. Therefore, these are two debating proponent-groups of what posterity will denominate as great poetry.

Why does one read poetry already definied in the common characteristic as of the first rank? Is it for education, professional equipment, to place one's self apart? Admittedly there may be some such readers, but they are few and probably shallow. Mathew Arnold gives us "sweetness and light"; however, that is a presumed result rather than a cause. It seems that there is but one predominating reason of any consequence and that is *pleasure*—enjoyment. What is this pleasure thus attained? We are sure that, above and beyond feeding ego, it is an exaltation, a further seeing, a further knowing, an appreciation of the whole rather than the part, a general quickening of life. Would anyone desiring such pleasure—in fact doting on such pleasure, *not read* and many times re-read, if the matter would actually give this pleasure? Undoubtedly he would read and re-read. If he ceases reading because the reading thereof fails to give these pleasures, is the matter poetry to him? Decidedly not. In fact, the matter at once becomes questionable, as our common characteristic lies in the fact that poetry of first rank gives the entire group of "readers of poetry" more or less pleasure.

To read great poetry, and certainly after reading, one must have a semblance of "education," "cultivation," and be not "ignorant." But is he a "professional"? Professional what? Poet? Hardly, for we have already denominated him a reader and an enjoyer thereof. Critic? That may be the crux in that one cannot read without criticising; however, does a contemporary criticism subject as it is to all of the ambitions, prejudices, foibles and idiosyncrasies of the times make an "educated," "cultivated" "not ignorant" person enjoy that which he did not enjoy before, presuming that he has already given of his knowledge and intelligence freely in order to enjoy? Thus vinegar becomes sweet? Hardly. There is a communicated instantaneous, instinctive reasoning in poetry that from its feeling or passion awakens a responsive and similar feeling. The thing itself must awaken this feeling. One may talk in musty laboratory verbiage forever of the nightingale's song and it will remain dry and dusty

stuff. But in a few lines Keats has the "reader of poetry" straining his ears to hear the tune unheard, and hearing.

To recapitulate, the "lay reader of poetry" must be that person who has received no exaltation, no further seeing or knowing even after applying his powers beyond intuition—his intelligence, logic, analysis to the matter at hand. As a result he does not concur that the matter read is poetry. It makes no difference what may be said during the next thousand years, this "lay reader of poetry" is personally sound, right and honest. It remains to be proved that, with his known sensitised equipment, his reactions are "personal" rather than universal.

As previously stated, there is only one way in which poetry has been denominated great and that is through the general concurrence of "readers of poetry." They have read, they have appreciated, they have gained pleasure. Thus, when the voting of the "readers of poetry" is in and time has counted the ballots, the majority thereof has elected the poet to his niche in the hall of fame. Critics have never done so; too often they are merely lost souls howling their particular dogmas in the wilderness. When I speak of the majority, I am not thinking in terms of popularity that the "one who sets himself apart" may envisage, for we have been very careful to present the right of suffrage only to the voters who have qualified through having the common characteristic of all "readers of poetry." In other words, it is the determined insistence of this appreciating multitude that states clearly: Here is that intangible essence that lifts one beyond self, beyond time and place, beyond work-a-day human standards. Has this majority working in close co-operation with its teller, time, ever been wrong?

Great poetry falls in the category of quiet work. It must make its own way silently and timelessly. It needs no artillery barrage, no air support, no screening tanks, no reconnaissance, supplies, communications, reporters, propagandists, or advocators. It exalts, it awakens, it discloses, and the disease is contagious. Without this quiet insistence that eventually permeates the body politic of the "readers of poetry" a minority, acclaiming, explaining, and criticising to prove their particular reactions to exotic connotations may easily reach the high plane of the completely absurd.

One should toss the piece in the mill, let grinding time and the innate delicacy and critical judgment of the "readers of poetry" turn the wheel and the test will be crystal pure. We hear of degenerated standards, degenerated tastes. One should be careful of these phrases: no fool is a fool to himself; there is no greater degenerator of taste than dogma. There is no need for sound, the raising of a voice in protest, nor for a single written line by any clique of defenders or promoters. After all, when one clique speaks to the other or to the majority, the party of the second part will always be "lay readers" to the party of the first part.

Merely introduce: May I present a working man and his working work. What matters whether he be acclaimed during his short, hectic and altogether unsatisfactory life? Why be a party to what history may easily prove to be the great hoax, the great absurdity? Why be a party to a "build up" for the faker or the fool or the limited, thus causing consternation to "readers of poetry" and pain to the truly great? Merely introduce; that much you owe your fellow man and the future "readers of poetry": "Here is a work that has given me that exaltation, that further seeing. Skim the page, it may be worth your while."

Do not tell me that I err in my premise as to what constitutes a "reader of poetry"

in that this one states that he enjoys Pope and that one Burns. An analysis invariably proves that he "enjoys more than." As experience cannot be common to all, connotations cannot have absolutely common meanings; nevertheless, they are, in the first rank poetry, sufficiently common and are sufficiently well understood, probably subconsciously by the great artist, that it will, more or less, reach the full audience. To qualify in the great electorate of "readers of poetry"—ones seeking the exaltation and the seeing and the knowing afforded by a Wordsworth, one must have agreed that a preponderance of the known great are really great. Mr. Non Lay Reader, shall we debate the greatness of Shakespeare or any of that galaxy originally named? If you would prove your present point that there is a "lay reader," you must first assail this group in disruption of our common characteristic.

CULLEN JONES, Colonel, U.S.A. Army, Utah.

THE DIVINITY OF ROBERT NICHOLS

I should like to thank Mr. Coblentz for pointing out, in his article "The Immortal Flame: Yesterday and Today," the essential weakness of the "Moderns" and strength of the real poets; for once again being the champion of the poets of "The proud old lineage." But may I say something more? He mentions two poets of the present day in whom "the visitations of the divinity in man" are apparent, Mr. Masefield and Mr. De la Mare. There is surely one more who should be named, for among these followers of Shelley there is none nearer him than Robert Nichols.

Because Robert Nichols's poetry is of the kind The Poetry Society so often rightly supports, and because by The Society he seems to have been forgotten since the reviewer of "Such was my Singing" wrote "he has every gift which can qualify a poet for a place in the great succession of our English romantics" it appears not merely suitable, but necessary, to give some examples from his poems of what Mr. Coblentz calls "Those glimmers, gleams and shadowings that seem to issue from some timeless realm beyond man"—the realm where poetry is born.

This is from "Night Rhapsody"—the whole poem is to the point—

"The divine solicitude
of midnight with ineffable purport charged."

Also too long to give in full is "Sunrise Poem," which begins like this, in music:

"The sun, a serene and ancient poet,
Stoops and writes on the sunrise sea
In softly undulant cyphers of gold
Words of Arabian charactery."

The "breath of divinity" that was Shelley's West Wind is here in the scent of limes:

"So the lime-incense blew
Into her life as once it had in his,
Though how and when and with what ageless change
Of sorrow and deep joy how could she know?"
"Breathe silent, lofty lime,
Your curfew secrets out in fervid scent
To the attendant shadows . . ."

The following lines are reminiscent of Vaughan rather than of Shelley, but the divine spirit shines in them the more brightly for that:

"Joys hath she too, joys thin and bright
Too thin, too bright, for those to hear
Who list with over-eager ear,
Or course about and seek to spy,
Within an hour, eternity.
First must the spirit cast aside
This world's and next his own poor pride
And learn the universe to scan
As a flower scans and not as man.
Then shall we hear the lonely dead
Sing and the stars sing overhead. . . ."

Of Robert Nichols Mr. Charles Morgan has written: "It is hard to believe that English poetry will allow to die the memory of so proud a servant, so passionate a lover." Is it not, however, for us, who seek to promote "a clearer, deeper sense of the best in poetry and of the strength and joy to be drawn from it," to make certain the temporary neglect of this great poet is swiftly ended? No complete collection of his poems has, as yet, been published. Presumably this is because there is not enough demand for it, and not merely as a result of the paper shortage, since so much unworthy verse—not all of it even verse—is still printed. Is there not some member of The Poetry Society who could tell us more about him, and who would be glad to make more widely known this singing that is like

"The hymn of some triumphant lyre
which sounded when the world was young"?

W.R.N.S., Falmouth. DIANA MOMBER.

REDWOOD ANDERSON'S POETRY

As has been said: "Miltonic criticism is vast but unadventurous"; and your correspondent, Raymund Bourne, has nothing remarkable to declare for the Grand Old Man.

I notice in his letter published in your last issue that R. B. artfully concentrates remarks I had made about "Paradise Lost" *in general* (in my appreciation of Redwood Anderson's poetry) against the few lines I quoted from Milton in the necessarily limited space at my disposal. The *particularised* comment I made on the two descriptions of Eve by Milton and Anderson respectively was this:

"How more life and light-pulsing is Anderson's touch—like the open-air sunniness of a Monet after the indoor tapestry-stuffiness of a Cuyp."

But let us look again at the two portraits of Eve:

"She, as a veil, down to the slender waist
Her unadornèd golden tresses wore
Dishevelled, but in wanton ringlets waved,
As the vine curls her tendrils. . . ."—Milton.

". . . her hair's luxury poured in one bronze stream
over her shoulder's ledge, rippled over
one clear breast and tumultuously fell
bright-foamed upon the grass . . ."—Anderson.

For Milton's lines R. B. claims "the living presentment of the woman Eve." He dismisses Anderson's as being "but an image." It may be pointed out that while Milton succeeds only too well in giving the "living presentment" or *photograph* (heavily emphasised by his comparison of "ringlets waved as the vine curls her tendrils"), the highest art is not concerned with photographic details which reduces significance, but with the impression, the image of the whole, just as the universe is not a photograph but, as Plato says, "a certain moving image of Eternity." But one has only to visit the nearest show of wax-works to realise that the nearest approach to nature is not the highest form of art.

Anderson's portrait is a lovely simplification of Eve in which her body is brought to livingness with a serene and limitless air beyond the immediacy of vision, by the poet's exquisitely balanced impressionism of matter.

And as to the other comparisons I quoted of the after-eating of the apple, I maintain that Milton's lines give some evidence of mawkishness, whereas in Anderson's description reside the naturalness and the poignancy which we demand of human kind whose epic is being unfolded before us. In his lines "and to his breast angrily crushed the breast and all the yielded loveliness of Eve," Anderson reveals a true psychological reaction on the part of Adam, i.e. his *anger*, which would have been inseparable from the gratification of his lust, made possible by such betraying circumstances.

It is with his persuasiveness that Anderson, the lesser poet, slips ahead of Milton time and again in his "Paradise." In "Paradise Lost," taken as a whole, Milton booms us down, he commands, he compels us to assent: so we do, but compulsion does not warm us.

My extremely mild criticism of Milton was most just. I did not claim that Redwood Anderson was a better poet than Milton. I merely said that certain passages of Anderson's "Paradise" rise superior to the obstinately classical poetry of Milton. This is a very modest claim and in *certain passages* many another poet could be said to be superior to Milton. What! Is Milton never to be allowed to nod? Does he always "mouth it well"?

Your correspondent writes that Milton's "learned allusions fit very well into the wide scope" of "Paradise Lost." Is a wide scope, then, sanction enough for anything to be thrown in, as a kind of poetic rag-bag? Dr. Johnson admitted the learning in "Paradise Lost," yet further remarked:

"But original deficiency cannot be supplied. The want of human interest is always felt. . . . We read Milton for instruction, retire harassed and overburdened, and look elsewhere for recreation."

It is in this matter of *creating human interest* that Anderson's poem in certain passages is better than Milton's. Surely it is reasonable to desire more humanity than mere learning in a poem concerning that most human pair, Adam and Eve. Anderson shows us their frailty, their humility and precariousness, surrounded as they are by the mystery of the divine plan. Milton's pair, in their pride, would try to explain the unknowable to the extent that their author "sweeping us along on his mighty pinion, seems sometimes to block the prospect with his own knowledge."

Keats, too, hits this particular nail on the head when, in one of his letters, he says that Milton "did not think into the human heart." Blake noticed that "Milton's

celestial and infernal regions are large but insufficiently furnished apartments filled by heavy conversation; and one remarks about the Puritan mythology its thinness." And Dryden, for all that I quoted him as giving supreme praise to Milton, did not hesitate in his "Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire" to accuse the great man of gracelessness, and to declare that Milton's "antiquated words were his choice not his necessity."

Moreover, from Milton's own point of view "Paradise Lost" never was what it might have been. It is a well-known fact that this poem was originally envisaged by him as a tragedy, but he was obliged to recast it as the (to him) *inferior* epic because the Commonwealth closed all the theatres. Our concern here is not whether tragedy or the epic is the more superior, but that Milton, in being compelled to change his form, was *working against the grain*, and there resulted a rigidity only too often felt in the course of his epic. As everyone who has done any creative work knows only too well, the shock of a compulsory major change in composition results in an inevitable compromise. The sense of one's argument being no longer projected in the form involuntarily conceived in the "inward necessity," causes a certain faltering of purpose, and contrivances creep in where the original feeling had been spontaneous. In its changed form "Paradise Lost" became filled with large slabs of learning in place of poignancy, and instead of naturalness there is much that is mawkish and unquickened.

Redwood Anderson, working with no such flawing of intention, but conceiving his "Paradise" from first to last as an epic, has given us abundantly of poignancy and naturalness.

In regard to R. B.'s criticism of what I said about Anderson's treatment of the inanimate, he (your correspondent) is, of course, speaking as an empiricist—one of those described by Plato (according to Maritain) who "cling to the trunks of trees and hug boulders, able to conceive only the things they touch and see." The world is undeniably manifest to our senses, but appearance is not reality and "things are not what they seem." Paracelsus truly said that thoughts become entities, and the thoughts and ideas which men put into the making of roads, bridges, houses, machines, viaducts, etc., invest these inanimate things with an overlay of livingness deriving from the living minds and imagination that conceived them. Let me hasten to assure R. B. that if he wants scientific proof of this, he will be disappointed. It is a matter of faith not of demonstration. Even the laws of Nature cannot be directly observed. And it is this "visionary realism," as separate from mere "visual realism," which Redwood Anderson brings to his poems about inanimate things.

As to what your correspondent writes of Tennyson, one may use his own argument that "the ultimate verdict must be largely a matter of individual opinion." R. B. says he can only read with labour much of "In Memoriam," and that parts of "The Princess" are definitely not "soul stirring." R. B. must not measure everything by his own limitations.

It is interesting to note here, especially as Tennyson seems to be very much in vogue just now among the rising generation, Poe's estimate of Tennyson:

"I call him, and *think* him the noblest of poets—*not* because the impressions he produces are, at *all* times, the most profound—*not* because the poetical excitement which he induces is, at *all* times, the most intense—but because it *is*, at all times, the most ethereal—in other words, the most elevating and the most pure."

Finally, as R. B. objects to that which gives the soul an elevating excitement being a definition of poetry, let me put it this way—the elevating excitement is the display of the poetic feeling enshrined in *the rhythmical creation of beauty*—which is Poe's definition of the poetry of words.

R. B. suggests "this process of 'soul elevating' is a dual one, demanding a sympathetic soul to be stimulated." Obviously the soul needs to be "sympathic." Who would deny that? The appreciation of poetry or of anything else depends on the good will and sympathy of the recipient. And if your correspondent had read my article properly he would have seen that his remark "one continuous thrill of soul excitement through all the pages of 'Paradise Lost' would be hardly compatible with a work of such magnitude" is quite superfluous, since I stated that the power of a poem to elevate is governed by its *length*.

It is, of course, very amiable of R. B. to write so much concerning the work of Redwood Anderson. It helps to arouse deserved interest in this poet's work. It might be of profit to R. B., too, to read Anderson's poetry himself.

Sherborne, Aug. 18th. ELIZABETH MYERS.

THE PURPOSE OF POETRY

In a recent number I was able to supply through the good offices of a handy book some definitions of the word *poetry* by certain eminent writers of verse over an extended period of time. I would now venture to put forward the perhaps rather more complex question of what is *the purpose* of poetry. Is it beauty of sound, "criticism of life," metaphysical exposition, a call to nobility of action, or a mere photograph of current events in some form of literary expression?

Let us consult the impetus that has inspired the many fine writers throughout the ages. With Homer we have what is possibly a first chronicle of war and travel; with Æschylus, Sophocles and Euripides the deep indestructible spirit of dramatic action and tragedy; with Sappho the prophetic note so often to be found in lyricism of the highest order; with the lighter Roman poets satire and criticisms, not divorced from cynicism and humour. With Chaucer we have a most astounding "release" of a study of his times with faithful and searching characterisations; with Spencer "high romaunt"; with Shakespeare everything. Milton, Pope, Wordsworth, Tennyson give us each in their own methods an equal degree of prominence in an intellectual and spiritual achievement that is perfectly well known to all readers of poetry. In all these and many others we see a strong urge to write powerfully. But what is the prime purpose and exercise of the labours of these giants of literature? Is it the *matter* or the *manner of telling it* which most absorbs their minds and is the over-ruling factor with them? It would certainly be a bold critic who would say that in his *Essay on Man* or on *Criticism* Alexander Pope thought more of his rhyming couplets than of the minute dissections of his subject matter. But this argument could not hold good over *The Rape of the Lock*, where the dainty transmission of a very trifling story occupies our attention; and surely this applies also to a large majority of the works of other poets. It is *the special manner of telling it* which makes it so valuable. The question therefore of *matter* can be disposed of immediately. The subject chosen for a poem should be noble, pertinent, or at least intelligible. *The manner of telling it*—be it long or short, rests with the poet and decides the value

of the work. We possess an outstanding presentation of words and perceptions, a framework of a much higher order than any other medium can supply.

If our pursuit is *not* through beautiful words why should we choose to write in stanzas or sonnets when the passages of prose are so often more lucid and so much more easily accomplished? The answer is obvious. We should become pamphleteers, tract-handers, propagandists and mere chroniclers of facts or promoters of action, in some ulterior cause. It is then quite obvious that *the manner* of telling his work should have pride of place in the poet's curriculum; and this brings us to the question of all kinds of unsatisfactory writing prevalent at the present day—slipshod, eccentric, obscure, ultra-modern and those poor-spirited imitations of some faction to which lip-service has to be done to be "in the literary fashion!"

The masterpieces of literature can never grow old or be out-moded by the transient movements of modernity. They are *for all time*, and stand like impenetrable rocks that the waves of the tide can never damage. It is only the work of the shadow-puppets that will disappear and fade away . . .

Why should we revert now to colourless writing and a form of art which denies its own existence? Many of us have strayed; some, with a critical intellectuality for metaphysics, but not for music, have sought to destroy metre in verse-writing. I contend that *aural satisfaction* is as necessary for verse as harmony in music and values in painting. There can be no "fashions" in poetry. Fine work is indestructible, and if standards are lowered by present-day bad taste, and the prevalence of bad work, the fine work is altogether unaffected. Have we in the fields of verse-writing no countries to retake, no lost or languishing lands to recapture and repopulate for the glory of England?

I would ask the younger generation, these young men from Oxford or elsewhere, in their clever and intellectual work, to favour their readers with a fuller measure of *melody*, and accord a consideration inseparable from a work of art to the twin forces of *harmony* and *values*.

If we write in verse then let it be in *fine* verse, *beautiful* verse, *delicate* verse, carved and fashioned like a piece of sculpture, but do not let us give to verse-writing that which is a negation of verse's very existence.

We are told that Virgil, while setting down his Aeneid, wrote six lines before breakfast and spent the rest of the day polishing them; and we know that nearly 1900 years later this was the method largely followed by most of our Victorian writers, so highly did they respect their art. From this again we gather it is *the manner of telling it*, not the theme, which is the motive and prime conveyancer of the power behind the poem. So I think about the writing of our present-day stage plays. For what have we not lost now that poetic diction is avowedly taboo with the theatrical manager? From the angle of beautiful manner what have we now to compare with the verse-dramas of Bulwer Lytton, W. G. Wills, Stephen Philips, J. Comyns Carr, J. Huntley McCarthy, J. Bernard Fagan? If verse-writing is discontinued in drama then drama is all the poorer for it, but if verse is divorced from poetry then the fibres of our noblest form of literature have been destroyed. It is the poet's office to "keep the key bright" and give beauty to the people, whether it be in the library or on the stage, with the cathedral touch of the metred line, which shows that we have outposts further than our earthly contacts. . . .

Where would the deep reflections of Gray's "Elegy" have been but for the pensive refrain and the sweet familiar dirge of its metred cadences? What products of the modern world could leave us with this inspiration? Surely it is *the manner of telling it* which makes a poem valuable, be it "Paradise Lost" or "Behold the Jew."

Plato calls poetry the language of the gods. I do not think that poets, philosophers, writers of drama or profound thoughts should do anything to hinder it from perhaps one day becoming the *language of mortals*. Our present purpose, therefore, should be the recapture of a lost realm—the music of four hundred years—for the glory of a cause initiated in England by Langland and Chaucer, espoused by Shakespeare, Milton and Tennyson. Faithful to the latter's behest, we should follow the gleam.

Hereford. ARTHUR ROW.

THE SUBTERRENE SKY

In answer to H. T. Dufton's inquiry, page 199, I do not know what modern poet uses the phrase "The Subterrene Sky," nor, divorced from its context, can I see why: But I would like to submit the following as an observation:

Dear Critic, you must not forget
The sun was never known to set;
Nor does he rise at breaking morn,
From some obscurity: newborn,
He simply stays, serene and still;
And sees this silly planet mill.

Yet poets say "the sun doth set,"
Regarding some earth's parapet;
They also see the sun arise,
And all applaud his enterprise:
The sky, might thus, by subterrene,
That's right down under Greenwich Mean.

Tewkesbury, Glos. A. V. LAW.

A. E. HOUSMAN AND TRANSIENCE

In Mr. William Wolff's reply to my letter of criticism he confesses to being puzzled because I stated unequivocally that he blundered in quoting:

"Oh tarnish late on Wenlock Edge
Gold that I never see;
Lie long, high snowdrifts in the hedge
That will not shower on me,"

as an example of A. E. Housman's preoccupation with the transience of life. I can appreciate the puzzlement; but suspect that it concerned chiefly the reason why he himself chose originally such an unfortunate example to illustrate his point. I repeat (and it is scarcely a matter of opinion) that the lines are nostalgic—that and nothing more.

Mr. Wolff's claim that nostalgia and a sense of transience are near relations seems to me a specious sort of defence. Suspicion and jealousy, for example, are closely

allied; but I should hesitate on that account to describe (outside of *Punch*) as jealousy the mental reactions of a police officer on observing a masked man, with a side of bacon over his shoulder, emerging from a grocer's shop at midnight.

Where Mr. Wolff is on apparently surer ground is in his attack on me—with chapter and verse from the biography *A.E.H.*, to which I referred him (making a rod, alas, for my own back)—for saying of Shropshire that it was the county that Housman loved so well. I admit readily that this was an error and one caused (although not excused) by my service overseas, remote from books of reference. I should have avoided Shropshire and should have spoken of "country" not of "county." I was wrong and accept Mr. Wolff's lengthy exposure and reproof.

But to make me wrong in this instance does not necessarily make Mr. Wolff right in his original contention. If one agrees with the suggestion that Housman never, in fact, felt any strong affection for Shropshire, then the numerous references to the county in "A Shropshire Lad" (already detailed in my first letter) were either placed there for "greater beauty of sound" (see Mr. Wolff's letter, POETRY REVIEW, 1945, No. 2, Vol. 36), or to conform with a preconceived title, or because Housman at times experienced nostalgic longings for similar country. The second notion cannot stand, since the title was decided on by someone else after the collection of poems was assembled and only agreed to reluctantly by Housman.

Whatever opinion one may form of Housman's personal philosophy—and that he was largely cynical is evident—one can hardly deny the gripping nostalgia that emerges intermittently from "A Shropshire Lad." If I admitted that this nostalgia might not be that of the poet himself, but only of the fictitious "Terence"; if I admitted that the gold of the broom, the snow of the hawthorn were in reality to have been found in Worcestershire and not in Shropshire, would either of these admissions destroy or even lessen the nostalgic strength of the poem? Would the lines thereby be converted into a direct comment on the transience of life?

On reading " 'Tis time, I think, by Wenlock town" and knowing the story of Housman's life, does one, or does one not, visualise a man separated by circumstances from the surroundings he loves and chafing at the ties preventing his *immediate* return to enjoy the spring glories of hill and hedge?

There are many who cling to an archaic notion of Oriental origin that to admit error is the ultimate degradation. As my letter shows, I do not belong to the club—nor am I yet sure that Mr. Wolff does. R. P. BRETT, L.A.C., R.A.F.

THREE 1945 CENTENARIES

Hugh Harris (London, N.W.2) reminds us:

Three jesters died in London town,
A century gone by;
Their dust lies buried in her earth:
Their laughter fills the sky.

With irony and pity blent
Their laughter still is heard,
Whene'er for frail humanity
Our human hearts are stirred.

Our senseless ways of selfish greed,
  Our foolish deeds of pride—
These Sydney Smith and Thomas Hood
  And Barham still deride.

For Mrs. Partington yet strives
  To stem the flowing sea,
And ancient figures walk again
  From *Punch* and *Ingoldsby*.

These jesters three may well laugh loud
  The present scene to view;
For if old time moves on apace,
  So should the earth move too.

THE POET (JAMES CLIFFORD) INSTRUCTS THE READER:

I ONLY arrange the words,
  The images and phrases,
The similes like swords,
  The airs and graces:
You must use imagination
  And intuition;
Thus do I serve to fashion
  For you the vision.

Hampton, Middx.

In sending my subscription—I would like to add how grateful I am always to THE POETRY REVIEW for its inspiration and deep interest in poetry.

One article like that of Ronald Fuller's called "A Country and a Climate," on Laurance Whistler's poem "Who Live in Unity," shows indeed how rich are the contents of the REVIEW and how fortunate are the few who are privileged to read and understand all the wonderful and real things which it contains!

That particular article I have mentioned is indeed a revelation of the only life worth living, the inward life with the outward, and I hope that even people who are not poets may somehow come to this understanding, for then they can face everything that is hard in this life, because they have peeped inside that "door which opens" in the mind of that other life.

I do thank the Editor and all the contributors who give of their best to bring to their readers and members the Vision without which all people must perish: IRENE H. LEWIS, Leatherhead.

The picture of my five years' army life is blotched and dotted with short periods of mental calm and the light of true perspective. On these occasions I have found

"How sweet it is to sit and read the tales
Of mighty poets . . ."

and in so doing, have always found your REVIEW both interesting and helpful in the selection and reading of contemporary poetry. The atmosphere of calm friendliness which this publication creates is a mental haven in these times, when so many bewildered minds write their sad bewilderings in almost unintelligible form (*re* T. S. Eliot school): T. N. FOSTER (Capt.).

Desert Island Poems: Report and Analysis

WHEN I originally suggested this game (see page 195 of the July issue) I expected some twenty answers, and intended publishing one or two of the most representative. I have now, however, by October 15th, received 66 entries, from far and wide, from ages to my knowledge ranging from 16 to 76, and with women only slightly outnumbering men. It seems fair, therefore, to regard this as a small but representative electorate for the most popular poems within the two limits imposed. For these two limits, post-1800 and not more than 150 lines, I have been severely criticised, not a few pointing out with ill-concealed glee that I had included in my own list Gray's "Elegy" (too early) and "The Hound of Heaven" (too long). My reason for the limit of length was that otherwise there would be a sufficiency of long works, even whole plays, to crowd out the smaller and lovable lyrics which one recites to oneself at odd moments, and my reason for the time limit is that without one there would be so much Elizabethan and seventeenth-century poems included that the more moderns in a brief list of thirty would likewise be left out.

So I still think that the limitations were what in *1066 and All That* would be described as a Good Thing. But with such a quantity of lists, so fairly representative, I changed my plans and began a rough analysis of each list, giving every poem a mark under the name of the poet, and eliminating all which I knew to break the rules. Of course, there were difficulties. There are two of Rupert Brooke's poems called "The Dead," and when *I* included Kipling's "Envoi" I meant "When Earth's Last Picture is Painted," for this was its first title. Others by this title obviously mean what is generally known as "The Long Trail." Nevertheless, I think the following analysis, which I will come to at once, is reasonably accurate, and, I think you will agree, extremely interesting. Here, then, is a list of what *you* consider the thirty most favourite poems within the rules laid down. (The figures indicate the number of persons voting for the poem.)

Keats' "Ode to a Nightingale" (36), Wordsworth's "Westminster Bridge" (23), Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind" (20), Rupert Brooke's "The Soldier" (19), De la Mare's "The Listeners" (18), Keats' "Ode to a Grecian Urn" (17), Rupert Brooke's "Grantchester" and the "Great Lover" (each 15), Keats' "Chapman's Homer," Masefield's "Sea Fever," Alice Meynell's "Renouncement," Yeats' "Innisfree" (each 14), Browning's "Home Thoughts from Abroad," Coleridge's "Kubla Khan" (each 13), Binyon's "For the Fallen," W. H. Davies' "Leisure," Julian Grenfell's "Into Battle," Keats' "La Belle Dame" (each 12), Dowson's "Cynara," Harvey's "Ducks," Keats' "Autumn," Masefield's "Cargoes," Tennyson's "Tears, Idle Tears" (each 11), Sassoon's "Everyone Sang," Yeats' "When You are Old" (each 10), Browning's "Prospice," Flecker's "The Old Ships," De la Mare's "Farewell," Masefield's "Beauty," Shelley's "Skylark" and "To Night" (all 9).

The Runners-up, with 8 marks each, were Belloc's "Tarantella," Kipling's "Way through the Woods," Rosetti's "Blessed Damozel," Davies' "Kingfisher," Tennyson's "Break, Break," and De la Mare's "All that's Past" and the "Scribe."

As for the most popular poet, I will give the figures for the number of poems mentioned, and then the total marks received by poets, on the basis of one mark for each time the poet was mentioned.

Poets (*poems mentioned*): Browning (40), Shelley (31), Housman and Kipling (28 each), Wordsworth and De la Mare (26 each), Rupert Brooke (25). Keats had only 18 poems mentioned.

Poets (*total number of times mentioned*): Keats (115), Rupert Brooke (94), Shelley (87), Browning (84), De la Mare (83), Tennyson (70), and Masefield (61).

If you like to add these two together you get the leaders as Keats, Browning, Shelley, De la Mare and Rupert Brooke.

Comment on the winning poems and poets: Keats is the undisputed favourite poet. Not only does the "Nightingale" feature in more than half the entries, but it appears 50 per cent more often than the next most favourite poem. He has five poems in the first seventeen favourites. Browning seems the most widely, as distinct from the most intensely, read, and Tennyson is comparatively nowhere. Rupert Brooke is the favourite of this century, and De la Mare the favourite living poet. So now I suggest that we all re-read these favourite poems, and have an evening's orgy of beauty. I am sorry I cannot announce the list nearest to this winning list, but I doubt if anyone came anywhere near it. Everyone had their own pet poems, apart from the immortals. Perhaps this final comment should be made on the winning poems and poets. We all know our Keats and the like, because they represent the distilled essence of the past. A century of selection produced a list of poems and poets for us to be taught or at least told about in our childhood, whereas the poems of this century are not yet sifted in popular esteem, and we should not know of most of them if we had not found them in anthologies for ourselves. Who knows, therefore, how our grandchildren will choose between say, Keats and Shelley, and Brooke, De la Mare, and Yeats?

So much for the winners. Now for some further facts and comment.

Range: Each list contained about 75 per cent of general favourites, and the rest very personal favourites, some of which, like my own choice of Barfield's Sonnet, were mentioned only once. On the other hand, the range was wide enough for many lists to contain no single poem in common though, as you will see, more than every other list contained Keats' "Nightingale."

Balance: A few had a "pet poet," one list having nearly a dozen of Housman, but few gave more than four poems to one poet. One must admit that between "ancient" and "modern" the moderns were nowhere. Eliot was mentioned 11 times in all, Auden 5, McNiece 3, C. Day Lewis 3, and the rest almost nowhere. Whether this means that few "moderns" take THE POETRY REVIEW or, as I think more likely, that few of this type of poem is anyone's "favourite poem," I know not. But these are facts.

One Poem Poets: Of these the most outstanding were Harvey's "Ducks," Grenfell's "Into Battle," O'Shaughnessy's "Music Makers," and Patmore's "Toys." Others were Clough's "Say Not the Struggle," Cory's "Heracleitus," Seeger's "I have a Rendezvous with Death," and McCrae's "In Flanders Fields."

Unmentioned: It is interesting to note that no one mentioned Andrew Young, so displayed in the new Dent's *Poems of Our Time*, nor Dylan Thomas nor Edward Shanks, nor even, I think, Rostrevor Hamilton. More remarkable is the list of those only mentioned once or at the most three times. It includes Abercrombie, Bottomley Padraic Colum, Lord Alfred Douglas, Richard Church, A. L. Gordon, Lionel Johnson,

Ruth Pitter, Ezra Pound, John Oxenham, Herbert Palmer, Herbert Read, Stephen Spender, Herbert Trench, William Watson and Oscar Wilde. A. E. only got seven marks, Blake, except for the "Tiger" (5) was hardly mentioned, Lawrence Binyon was almost a one-poem poet with "For the Fallen," and the same applies to Dowson, whose "They are not Long" was almost the only poem mentioned other than the immortal "Cynara"; nor was Humbert Wolfe popular, with only 8 marks.

Surprises: On the other hand, I was surprised, if I may make a personal comment, at the popularity still of Matthew Arnold (23), Byron (22), Hardy (23), and at the number of Stevenson's poems selected, 18 in all. Hopkins, old in time, yet the founder (am I right?) of the "moderns," was mentioned 24 times with 17 poems, and I was pleased though surprised at the popularity of Wilfred Gibson (16 marks with 7 poems).

I have no room for specimens of your lists, or the interesting comment with which many of you embellished your selections. But as all of you know our President's own anthology, *Other Men's Flowers* (Cape), now happily reprinted, I will give you his own selection which he was good enough to send in from the Viceroy's Palace at Delhi. Here, then are Lord Wavell's thirty favourites, all save two from his own anthology.

"If there were Dreams to Sell," Beddoes; "The Tiger," Blake; "Auguries of Innocence," Blake; "Rudel to the Lady of Tripoli," "The Bishop Orders his Tomb," and "Any Wife to any Husband," Browning; "The Strange Music," "Lepanto," "The Last Hero," and "The Rolling English Road," Chesterton; "Kubla Khan," Coleridge; "Cynara," Dowson; "The Old Ships," Flecker; "Into Battle," Grenfell; "Eve," Hodgson; "Battle Hymn of the Republic," Julia Ward Howe; "Tam i' the Kirk," Violet Jacob; "Ode to a Nightingale," Keats; "Song of Diego Valdez," "Sestina of the Tramp Royal," "Gipsy Vans," and "A St. Helena Lullaby," Kipling; "Consecration" and "To-morrow," Masefield; "The English War," Dorothy Sayers; "I Have a Rendezvous," Seeger; "Arab Love-Song," Thompson; "Magpies in Picardy," Cameron Wilson; and "An Irish Airman forsees his Death" by Yeats. Lord Wavell had also included "The Hound of Heaven," as I did, but it is in fact too long.

No doubt the new edition of *Other Men's Flowers* will be also out of print by the time these lines appear; if not, be swift in buying one of the most human and lovable collections which has yet appeared. Here the scholar gives way to the man of action who, with a mind filled with an endless store of beauty (and he knew at one time all these poems by heart), can draw upon that store for mental stimulus or quieting in the hour of need. The notes to each section, and often to an individual poem, are fresh, vigorous, and full of the writer's own pungent humour and wit, and there was no need to be so modest about his one contribution, "Sonnet for the Madonna of the Cherries," which he modestly puts at the end. One contributor at least included this in the list of Desert Island Poems.

CHRISTMAS HUMPHREYS.

THE POETRY REVIEW to me has been like an oasis in this vast desert of muddled thought and destruction of beauty. One has to be sincerely thankful that no act of man can take away the ability of the mind to rise above its surroundings: A BRADFORD MEMBER.

The Holmes Prize for Poems of Place

Award and Comment

A LARGE proportion of the entries submitted were disappointing in that they could hardly be called poems of any particular place, recognisable as such from the content of the poem. Many were pastoral poems, descriptive of the country at large, and others, such as "Huntsham Wood," by Joan Gaved, were the poet's reactions to the mood of a place. Too few were poems about some *particular* place, such as the guide-book to that place would be delighted to include. The general standard of the entries lacked distinction, far too many entries exhibiting the worst aspects of the careless craftsman, to wit clichés, "hiccoughs" and contentment with the obvious. Clichés could be gathered by the bucketful, and the time is coming when this magazine should keep in standing type a long list of phrases which must not be used in verse for at least a hundred years to come. The number of "silver moons," "storied pasts," and mystic all sorts of things, from the night to a cuckoo, was lamentable, and the experienced reader throws such poems aside with the same weariness with which the genuine artist looks at the myriad undistinguished water-colours with which our beauty spots are insulted year by year. "Hiccoughs," the sudden break in a clear-cut rhythm, were also in evidence. The stronger and cruder the rhythm, the more it must be obeyed, and any sudden variation entirely destroys the aesthetic value of the poem. As for the obvious, there is no such thing in the craft of verse as the doctrine of "that will do." Either the word is the exactly right one, chosen with exquisite care from the 26,000 others in the English language, or it is not. If not, then it will not "do." Indeed, those who read great quantities of amateur verse so long for a gleam of genuine personal experience, or a new idea or feeling newly expressed, that the prize-winner often romps home for a mere touch of originality.

And so to the winners. The first is "Kew Gardens after Rain," by Wrenne Jarman. Second, jointly, "Huntsham Wood," by Joan Gaved and "A Song of Birdlip," by Edgar Proudman, and thirdly, "The Abbey, Glastonbury," by Nesta Martin. Close runners-up: "Evening Hill—Lilliput—Dorset," by Erna Jackson, and "The Two Shrines, a Song of Walsingham," by M. E. J. Hughes.

The first prize is awarded for its originality of metaphor, genuine imaginative feeling and obvious—a trifle too obvious—hard work of craftsmanship. The standard of the entries must be judged by the fact that this poem, in the Judges' opinion, was outstanding for these qualities. "Huntsham Wood," if a trifle sentimental, has genuine feeling but it is hardly—future competitors please note—a poem of place. It therefore ties with a Kiplingesque "Song of Birdlip." "The Abbey, Glastonbury" is a gallant effort which, though easy to criticise in detail, purveys a mood, and where the standard of craftsmanship is low this quality ranks high. Even Nesta Martin did not take the trouble to add up her ten syllable lines, and a sudden line of twelve syllables produces hiccoughs. Both runners-up were a trifle too long. The first twelve lines of "Evening Hill" are unnecessary, and some of the twenty-five verses of "The Two Shrines" lower the level of the rest. The same applies to "Surrey," by W. H. D. Morgan, which by its length gets tedious, and "The Prospect from Shooter's Hill," which deserves strong commendation for its elaborate verse-form gallantly sustained. Others to be commended are Mabel Beeken's sequence on "Canterbury," Gladys Wilkinson's "Songs from the Heart of Bradford," with its constantly changing

rhythm, Phyllis Bower's "Greenwich," with a high level of craftsmanship, Catherine Forbes' "Vale of Avalon," John Cook's "Westminster Bridge," and Peter Bagford's "Knaresborough."

For next year's competition, please, let us have poems of a definite place, and fewer clichés and hiccoughs and more hard work.

£10 FOR POEMS OF PLACE

Mrs. A. Dorothy Holmes, a Shropshire member of The Poetry Society whose *Storm Wrack* and *Cotswolds Calling* have gone round the world in aid of desirable causes, offers £10 annually in competition for poems of place. Competitors, who must be members of The Poetry Society, may submit not more than two poems.

Less than a hundred lines should suffice, and songs and lyrics rather than factual narrative poems are preferred. All entries for the 1946 competition must be typewritten and bear the name and address of the author, accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope—a 1d. stamp will suffice either way, a covering letter being unnecessary—and must be addressed to "The Holmes Prize, THE POETRY REVIEW, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1," not later than March 1st. The judges may divide the prize money into three parts—a first award of £5, and two of £2 10s. All entries shall remain at the disposal of the adjudicators until the award is published, and the winning poems and any other specially mentioned entries may be published in THE POETRY REVIEW or elsewhere.

THE PREMIUM EDITOR'S REPORT

A really bumper entry has resulted from our greatly increased lure, but not perhaps vastly different in quality. And yet, while there were comparatively few outstanding poems, the general level is indicated adequately in the long list of "commendeds" which appears at the end of this report. There were some newcomers, but not many, but it is too early yet to encourage any belief that you will remain unchallenged by an influx of new aspirants to our gilded bays.

Ruminating, a little ruefully, upon my barely completed labours, I am persuaded that you have to learn one more, and perhaps your hardest lesson, in order to make further progress. That lesson is self-criticism. No doubt you will claim to practise it and yet the almost complete unanimity with which you assail me with the full, permitted number (four) of poems, shows conclusively that you are not sure which of them is best. It is to be remarked that some of our better poets have no such doubt, contenting themselves with a single entry; and this is significant.

Now it is clear to me that if you have four poems to send and an adequate development of the self-critical sense, you will swiftly select your most fragrant bloom, anxious, indeed, not to confuse me, or cloud my judgment; and will hide your lesser blossoms away. But forgetting in your competitive anxiety the superlative worth of developing your own judgment, you refuse it the exercise which alone can enlarge it, and hand me the problem in the hope (presumably) of extending your chances. It is, of course, true that if Homer nods, I cannot fail to do so, and frequently, but you will

be less benefited by my poor judgment than by your own keener perception. You do not write poetry to make me a better man but to enrich your own souls.

So here is a new rule which will benefit us both. No more than two poems are to be entered for any one Premium Competition in future. You will note how characteristically and characterlessly I have qualified the stern rigour of my own argument by abstaining from demanding the indicated, irreducible single poem, but forgive me my weakness for the moment. I may become sterner later on.

The other rules which were laid down for your guidance and protection were, in general, well observed. Where they were ignored, and they often were, I have ascribed the lapse to an ignorance of them and made no disqualifications. But now that there will probably never be a time when there is only one Poetry Society Competition running, it is of the first importance that each of your two poems submitted for the Premium should be plainly marked as for that competition and should bear your name and address. The stamped addressed envelope, that piece of common courtesy, is also sometimes forgotten and I call the attention of those in need of a reminder that by offering a prize of £10 we do not expect to be involved in any unnecessary expense. We cannot indeed return MS. not accompanied by this means of transport; and this is, of course, quite customary.

Now for the adjudication. The winner, whose poem has no immediate rival, bears a name familiar enough in this contest; he is Wilfred H. Bartlett, of Calverleigh, Tiverton, Devon. His sonnet filled me at once with that excitement which marks all true poetry and forbade any division of the prize. Here it is.

To a Bird, Migrating

Ah, must you go, on whom we wait for song,
Plunging our sorrows in your silver stream;
You that by virtue of delight belong
To the enchanted paradise of dream?
Your liquid joy has given to the sun
A warmth beyond its rays' soft-fingering power,
And fashioned from earth's tangled music one
Shrill note of courage in the darkest hour.
If you depart we'll face the winter's rage
With but the memory of your dauntless voice
Shaking the structure of our mortal cage
With its resounding summons to rejoice:
Yet if you stay and sing we shall not know
The sweet, unearthly quiet of the snow.

The runners-up, the Highly-Commendeds, are few in number since, as I warned you, I was determined to be more exigent in my judgments than in the past. Their poems, selected by me where, as is the case in one or two instances, a competitor has more than one highly-commended, will appear together, in our next issue. This innovation is designed not only to offer recognition to good work but to provide a more comprehensive conspectus for the enlightenment and encouragement of the less successful.

Highly Commended

Marguerite Evans, Pontypridd;
C. E. J. Fryer, Maidstone;
Norah M. Gibbs, Westward Ho!
Phoebe Hesketh, Rivington;
Jean Kenward, Belfast;
T. Weston Ramsey, London, E.C.1;
Cynthia Palmer, Huntington, York.

Commended

E. Ansell, Cambridge;
Charles Brooke, Godalming;
Marjory M. Browne, Kenton, Exeter.
Vivien Bulkley, Lyme Regis;
James Clifford, Hampton;
Winifred Dawes, Chadwell Heath;
T. C. Dawson, Stoneleigh;
Margaret Sheppard Fidler, Princes Risborough;
C. H. Harding, Rickmansworth;
Jessie B. Heard, Bristol 7;
Lawrence W. Hockey, Newport, Mon.
John Kennedy, R.A.F., Upwood;
Geoffrey T. King, Wheathampstead;
P. MacLaughlin, London, W.8;
Redcliffe McKie, Brighton;
Eva Martin, Brighton;
J. Sackville Martin, Itchenor;
I. M. Mills, Roydon;
James Crawford Milne, Arbroath;
Wren Diana Momber, Falmouth;
I. V. Orford, Hampstead;
D. Parker, Gerrards Cross;
Olwyn Pogmore, Kingston-on-Thames;
Derek Reade, Tettenhall;
E. N. Ridgway, Heswall;
H. Broadberry Seaman, Ruislip;
C. Busby Smith, Gerrards Cross;
Margery Smith, Nottingham;
Elizabeth A. Swapp, Arbroath;
Ruth Tenney, Streatley;
Kay Toovey, Amersham;
Susan Torrey, Heacham;
E. C. Toye, Rugeley;
H. Trevelyan-Thomson, York;
Thomas Demarden Williams, Highgate;
William Wolff, New Malden.

There seems to be some uncertainty, in some quarters, as to the eligibility of "Commended" poems for Poetry Review. That is no doubt due to the habit of marking the MS. which has been followed hitherto and to the undoubted fact that, in quality poems so marked are certainly fit for publication. But the exigencies of space and editorial considerations must prevent their appearance in this Review and it was for that reason (to provide the necessary medium for publication) that "Poetry of Today" was created. The same medium is also available to poems marked P.T. but in future there will be a simplification of marking whereby confusion will be avoided. It is hoped to correct now the irregularity with which the appearance of "Poetry of Today" has been attended, an irregularity due entirely to war conditions, but printers are by no means relieved yet of their shortages either of paper or labour.

ON THE ART OF WRITING POETRY

It has been said that the artist Whistler, when summoned on a charge of selling for hundreds of pounds paintings which had taken only a few hours to produce, replied to the judge's incredulity with the explanation that behind every stroke of the brush lay a lifetime's experience. The Premium Editor has reminded us that the same appreciation may be applied to poetry. Songs which are to become immortal are not the

result merely of a second-hand technical knowledge coupled with a little rapid inspiration. Such experiments indeed may produce an illimitable succession of quatrains or of couplets, but if poetry is to be distinguished from verse it must spring from a far deeper source.

A true poet is born, not made. That is certain, for the earliest years of his life are filled with the most rich and varied impressions, all of which are valuable to him, and none must be allowed to escape. Upon his entry into the world he is equipped with powers of awareness and perception greater than those of his brothers, and is therefore susceptible to tremendous waves of emotion, of comprehension, and even of vision. As he receives the impact of all forms of beauty and of love, so is he equally vulnerable to ugliness, hatred and despair. Therefore, shielding himself from the perpetual conflict between idealism and materialism, he dismisses the boundaries of Time and Space, making for himself an escape tunnel into Eternity.

This exquisite detachment results, paradoxically, in a complete unification with everything that is alive. The anonymity of the years, the stars, the earth, are to the poet his refuge and his being.

But there is another side to the picture. Many people may be poets by nature and suffer the anguish of the world accordingly, but it is only to those in whose veins surges the perpetual rhythm of the tides that fulfilment comes. The pulse beat which is to be found in all things from the feeble sea-anemone to the great ocean itself is locked and captured in the poet's blood. Never is he without appreciation of sound and shape, never is his teeming imagination still or his mind unaware of the elusive Will-o'-the-wisp Perfection. That is his grail, and after it must he follow ceaselessly—however hazardous, however far the pilgrimage.

Then, too, as a final attribute—because he reads and listens so much and so widely he holds the natural heritage of metre from those who have gone before. This he possesses always, latent, wise, and "waiting for the spark from Heaven to fall."

In speaking of his own art, Whistler upheld the integrity of all whose vocation it is to create. For though the actual birth of a poem may be completed within an hour, its conception lies in the very womb of Time, and the process of its gestation must be everlasting.

JEAN KENWARD.

BACK TO BEDROCK

Re-reading not long since the *Poems* of Glyn Jones I was made to recall with what extreme pleasure I first came across that brief statement of his notion of the fundamental requirements of poetry which he makes in the autobiographical sketch appended to these verses. The frenziedly analytical minds of the present century have muddied over with the pale cast of their involved thought the simpler but clearer statements made by Sidney, Dryden and Shelley to which, as a young student, I found it completely satisfying to subscribe. In reminding us of the simple truth that "only poetic ideas are really valuable in a poem," Glyn Jones drags us back willy-nilly to that attitude of empirical criticism which is the only possible mood in which to form a proper judgment of what is and what is not poetry. The argument which would buttress that contention is restated by him in the same paragraph in these words:

"Keats, say, is a good poet . . . but because he wrote a line like 'Beauty is truth,

truth beauty' . . . or because he wrote the 'Bright Star' poem and used the word 'gluts' in the third line of his sonnet on the sea? To me, obviously the latter."

There is no need to labour the point, but believing as I do that a simple statement such as this contains sufficiently the core of poetic values, I retraced my steps to see how far the poet had adhered to his statement of faith in his own work, since so many poets—notably Wordsworth—who produced theories of poetry, failed in the demonstration of their beliefs. This search for his "poetic ideas" yielded a harvest which, I am inclined to suggest, for sheer pleasure entitles Glyn Jones to a place in the true succession of English poets.

First then, in "Gold" we find the line "the gold-clot of my love's fair head," and it is the juxtaposition of "clot" and "gold" which makes the example valid for the purpose of examination—the "clot" gives to the metaphor of the gold the extra life and sense of poetic alchemy which makes the phrase worth remembering. In "Meeting," again, is a reference to "chiming breasts" and although the use of the word chiming is here somewhat exotic its association is not *too* remote or irrelevant. To substitute for the look or feel of something a sensation in terms of sound is a legitimate poetic transmutation. In "Esyllt" comes "The still gorse-hissing hill burns" and allowing the comparative banality of the "burning" hill one cannot fail to be reminded of the many similar double-attributes which excited the taste even as far back as "Beowulf."

Looking still deeper into "The Ship" I was struck by two noble examples of imagination and poetic insight:

"Where were her grappled metals clenched in one
The bolts stamped through her printed side."

That word "grappled" gives at once a sense of clipping and straining as of two wrestlers striving to hold and to loosen the hold of the other,—which is just how a ship's plates must behave: and the use of "clenched" instead of "welded" or a similar technical word gives the vessel the essential suggestion of personality. "Stamped" is much better than "riveted" not only because it has an easier sound and rhythm for poetry but because it conveys the idea of a seal being set on the process of construction and leads naturally to the use of *printed*, which adds a sense of continuity in the hull wherein may be read the record of labour and care.

Contiguous we find the startling picture of the gulls—

"lifting and falling on their way to sea,
Seeking a loophole in the wall of wind,"

and here might be illustrated the claim that real poetry does not only find a *new* way of saying a thing but that its new way proves also to be a *righter* way. Such a newness does not always fully justify itself, as we can see if we examine some of the adjectives and metaphors in "Dock," where we come across "brass canal," "hennaed hooks of hair," "pippin-breasted" and "the hiss of cold grey grass across the tingling streets," in a description of a girl in a shower of rain. "Tingling streets" is good, yes, but some of the other poetic coin rings a little false—the newness tends to appear newness only.

Not so the notion of "the rigid thicket of the skeleton" in "Sands," or the "cloud-clawed mountains" of "Scene," the "tea-leaf swimmer" of "Island," the "blurt of pain" in "Night," the "ravelled finger-nail of road" in "The Slum World." So much of the excellence and pleasure of poetry depends upon the merely occasional

inset of a word-jewel formed by the felicitous or even, on occasion, for the composer, the fortuitous juxtaposition of words and especially of attributary and descriptive words with their nouns. Out of this volume may be recorded—only a few of many—the "pouring sun" of "Shadow," the "gaudy grass" of "Island," the "honeyed hooey" and "the ruggered lungs" of "Choirs" (what a suggestive word that "ruggered" is, especially for a Welshman!). There are, too, the "path-laced hill" and the "bald balloon" of "The Flying Continent" and the "mobbing flowers hug my feet" in "Scene."

Simile and metaphors are the oldest of the poet's stock-in-trade, but the mere *device* of metaphor is again not enough—it must be the inspiration of words that cast themselves into what turns out to be metaphor which makes poetry. In "Town," for example, we find a half-baked line like

"their sheepish smokes
A soft snort of grey like human breath"

which sounds rather strained and affected, but in "Tree," "Splashed as with startled mud-lace of burst bomb" is more real. In writing "Like grief the rowdy swans return," Glyn Jones seems to have yielded to the external pressure of the modern literary vogue of obscurity, and indeed we find other minor blemishes of a similar nature in his work. Little is gained from such lines as "Masty girl-curled angels flesh" or "the nudge of brittle tears." The same misdirected yearning to be different *can* be resolved into true poetry as these same poems often show. In "Easter," for instance, occurs the line "No stick of light bulls on the useless lids," where the use of the word "bulls," normally a noun, as a transitive verb, is poetically legitimate and effective and the normal association of the word with "eye" vividly enhances the figure of speech.

Such examples as these not only demonstrate Glyn Jones's claim for regard as a poet of sincere inspiration and literary integrity but evidence the essential purity of the theory of poetry on which they are founded. No examination of his work would, however, be complete without mention of his prose, particularly that in the "Blue Bed" volume, which is riddled with poetic ideas and forms to an extent which would have delighted Milton and Shelley as much as they do the modern reader. What could be more satisfying than the picture of "swimming flesh chinaed in empty water," the reference to water itself as an "uneasy glass," the "divided flesh of the hills," the "sequined earth" and the "fine dry drizzle of coal dust" so familiar to every inhabitant of the Ystrad Valley, or that brilliant "cratered mouth" so suggestive in its compressed metaphor?

In "The Kiss," again, is a tree, "like a planted arm," "naked veins tunnelled blue," and glimpes of the "bruise-blue desert sky." Where is there a more convincing poetic idea than that of the wind "wincing through the bracken" and the "cautious moon" "scattering light"?

"Eden Tree" yields more—"the soles of his feet gulped steadily at the yielding earth"—"the fibres of a cloud." "The Blue Bed" itself has "tall tiger-lilies trumpeting perfume"; "Porth y Rhyd" the "laddered sea-sun on the sands," the "slanted ports of the nostrils" and a fire "antlered all the time with flame."

This is the stuff of which poetry is and should be made.

April, 1945. ANEURIN RHYS.

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